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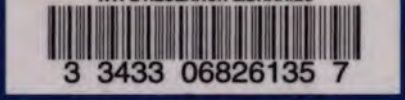
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MOTHER, HOME, AND HEAVEN.

MOTHER, HOME, AND HEAVEN.

BY

GEORGE EDWARD JELF, M.A.,

CANON OF ROCHESTER.

"Born of a poor Mother . . . far from Home . . . the King of Heaven."—BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR.

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TO

MY MOTHER,

MOST LOVING, MOST BELOVED,

WHO ON EARTH

MADE HOME BEAUTIFUL TO ME,

AND IN PARADISE,

ACCORDING TO HER PROMISE, IF IT BE HIS WILL,

PRAYS FOR ME,

THAT WE MAY BE FOR EVER WITH THE LORD IN HEAVEN.

51 X 14

PREFACE.

NOTHING could be further from the writer's intention than to appeal in these pages to mere sentiment. It is the heart and the life, the will and the affections, that he would earnestly wish to reach, with a view to religious action in faith and hope and love, and to the raising up of a right spirit among the members of the family and household regarded as Christians.

The words which this little volume illustrates are said to be the three most beautiful words in the English language. The Divine, and yet most human, ideas which underlie them are at the very base of our being, and our social instincts, and our innate expectations of immortality in the world to come. And the words are dear to us, because they express our best and deepest desires, our highest and truest self, our tenderest and most lasting and most fruitful recollections.

Of course, there are bad mothers in the world, and some homes are miserable, and there is a multitude not walking Heavenward.

But as, on the one hand, an unkind mother is rightly called an unnatural mother; so, on the other hand, even the worst man has, in the depth of his breast, some regard for her who bare him; and the most homely home, ay, and the most wretched sometimes, has no place like it for father, brother, and son; and Heaven, after all, is longed for even by the careless, however faintly, however vainly, as the final goal of this brief life.

And surely for the holy and the humble, the name of Mother, and the memories of Home, and the yearning for Heaven, are full of sweetness and light, and commended by the many voices of men and women and children, and by the glorious Voice of the LORD Himself. It is not too much to say that "Mother" is one of the key-notes in the human side of Bible history; and we have felt from our childhood how thoroughly the associations of "Home" are blended with the Old Testament and the New; and every one knows that "Heaven" is the infinite secret, the matchless revelation, the perfect motive and perfect beauty, of all the Word of GOD.

No wonder that for us men there should be such a charm, such an inexhaustible reservoir of thought and speech, in these three words of ours. All of us have much to say, much to think of, in reference to them.

The writer, indeed, has to own how very incompletely he has handled a theme so attractive and so

comforting, though he can sincerely declare that even what he has written represents much study and reflection. May he venture to ask those brothers and sisters and mothers of the LORD, who read these pages, to take only one meditation at a time, and to fill up the vacant spaces (for they must be many) with thoughts, and prayers, yes, and thanksgivings of their own? So may he who has sown a little seed, and those who have secretly, perhaps even with tears, devoted themselves to its care and culture, be allowed to rejoice together at the great Harvest-home of the Holy and Heavenly Reaper.

NOTE.

After the whole of this book, including the preface, had been prepared for the press, the writer found that a volume, with identically the same title, was published some years ago by Mrs. Beecher-Stowe in the United States, where it has had a very large circulation.

As the said volume, which the writer has never seen, was apparently unknown in England, he hopes his own publication may make its way here, and would be glad to think that it may receive a generous welcome even from Americans, at least on this side of the water.

July, 1891.

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MOTHER.

"For a mother's love is nearest
To the love that angels bear;
Some in simple hearted gladness,
Some with bitter tears to weep,
Watch the mothers in the shadow,
When the children fall asleep."

MOTHER, HOME, AND HEAVEN.

I.

THE EXCELLENT NAME.

"A mother is a mother still,
The holiest thing alive."

COLERIDGE.

"My Mother." What a host of blessings gather round the words! What happy memories they recall! What hopes shine through them! What a mingling there is therein of thankful and regretful feeling, joy out of suffering, calls to purity and prayer and peace, the exchange of smiles and tears, the daily kiss and the lifelong love!

Here are combined strength and weakness, liberty and law, duty and affection, the flesh and the spirit, persuasion and authority, recollection and promise, the example of goodness and the encouragement to penitence, anguish and rejoicing, the nurse of infancy and the guide for youth, the delight over our manhood and the solace of our sickness, the

type of all human gentleness and sympathy and intercession and patient love.

"Mother" is indeed a root-word, written in largest capitals in the hearts of all. We all know it, and love it, and need no explanation of it. From our earliest years, through all changes and chances, it remains the chief of all household words, and represents the very best of our heaven-sent treasures.

Mother's name may be called a perpetual heritage for the children of men. Generation after generation, at every hour, moment by moment, fresh blessings and consolations are thus arising through GOD'S gift to our race. Hardly anywhere, even in the "cruel habitations" of the earth, does the birth of a babe fail to bring happiness to one at least—some expression, however transient, of the deepest and most beautiful of all our affections —some light to lighten the darkness of the world with the heavenly glory, shed over the whole course of human history by the perfect picture of the Mother and the Child.

In the manger at Bethlehem, on the cross of Calvary, man sees the meaning, the love, the loveliness of mother. The LORD Himself teaches us, from those marvellous thrones. But the earth is full of His teaching. In the humblest cottage, as in the grandest palace, motherly affection reigns supreme, motherly ministrations are the great

attraction, winning a life-long response, "strong as death."

"To bring a helpless babe to light,
Then, while it lies forlorn,
To gaze upon that dearest sight,
And feel herself new born,
In its existence lose her own,
And live and breathe in it alone;
This is a mother's love."

Here, surely, is the touch of nature which makes the whole world kin—here, the bond which binds us all in this vast family, age after age, with "the mother of all living"[1]—here, the channel whereby the pitifulness of GOD has specially been preserved to us. What all but endless links with the past, what continual renewal through the coming years, what consoling fellowship with the Source of all matronly graces, does this good name suggest!

Herein, as one generation goeth, and another generation cometh, those graces of the mother repeat themselves in the daughter of her affection, who becomes, in her turn, to her own children, the type and pattern of attractive love. And so, this precious privilege, constantly handed on, remains abidingly for the softening of character, and the improvement of tone, and the progress in all that is pure and true and sweet and womanly.

And, on the other hand, what an unspeakable

[1] Gen. iii. 20.

loss to heart and life and influence is felt and shown where this holy relationship is thwarted or undeveloped. Who does not feel compassion for the poor Queen of Scots, torn early, by her unnatural cousin (who herself had no child to bring out the kindliness of nature), from her only son, and "never allowed to indulge those tender passions, nor to taste those joys, which fill the heart of a mother?"[1]

How much the lack of this explains the wanderings and rebellions and defilements of men! Who can wonder at the fall of the brilliant poet, or the melancholy of the Christian one, at the vices of the French marshal, or the cruelties of the Medici princes, or the tyranny of our own worst king? The death of a good mother, or the life of a mother given to ambition, pleasure, or sin, often decides the man's after-course, and shows us the reason of his decadence or misery. And though, of course, the grace of GOD can overcome in any one the tendencies of birth and heredity, yet it is said by a great observer, that when the mother's character is bad—in spite of the excellence and goodness of the father—the cases are exceedingly rare in which any good comes of the children. Happily, the converse is true, that "where the mother is good and virtuous—no matter whether the father be reckless, profligate, or debased—she

[1] These are no words of sentimentalism, but written by the Presbyterian historian.

can, by the influence of her example, and the coercive power of her gentleness and affection, save her children, and bring them up to virtuous courses in life." Both parts of this statement should be remembered by every mother. No advantages, no talents, no lineage, will compensate for the lack of her prayers and care. But, having these, any man may even "grapple with his evil star."

S. Augustine was probably the greatest genius of the Christian Church. Whither would his genius have led him, where would his wild sceptical life have landed him, apart from the holy Monica? What did not the Wesleys owe to their mother, or John and Henry Lawrence to theirs, or Wellington, Tasso, Bacon, Scott, Livingstone, to theirs? Whence, but from their noble mother, came the nobility of the Napiers? Or how would Goethe and Schiller have started with such pre-eminent excellence, if their mothers, as well as their fathers, had not been excellent also?

Yes, and for quiet, simple folk it is just the same. What is so excellent as holiness, so noble as the service of GOD? And, though the world knows little of its greatest men, its truest saints, it is at least most certain that much of what is pure and bright and reverent and of good report in any of these is due, in largest measure, to the loving care and gracious life of the mother. Beautiful remem-

brance, blessed hope, beaming light, how can we ever sufficiently thank our FATHER for it? Well may we sing of this gift of motherhood:—

"Thou art the universal praise
Of every human heart, the secret shrine
Where seer and savage keep a dream divine
Through growing and declining days;
And but for thee,
And thy unselfish love, thy sacrifice,
Which brings heaven daily nearer to our eyes,
Men whom the rude world stains, men chilled by doubt,
Would find no ray of Deity
To fire a faith gone out."

Yes, indeed, it has been truly said, that "it is the mothers of England that will save the country." But it is not their political power that regenerates society, nor is it their advance in the use of intellectual gifts, nor yet their imitation of the work of men. Not thus, but by faithfulness to their own proper sphere of duty and influence do they govern the world as "with the whole power of a despot." A Christian nation is the gradual outcome of many Christian homes; and each Christian home, in whatever grade, gains its true sweetness and light, its real power of increase, its growing leverage on the world, chiefly from the self-sacrificing love of the Christian mother.

II.

THE FATHER'S HELPMEET.

"For contemplation he, and valour formed,
For softness she, and sweet attractive grace,
He for GOD only, she for GOD in him."

MILTON.

A MAN is "the image and glory of GOD; but the woman is the glory of the man," called to "reverence her husband," and to count it all joy to serve and aid him.

If the precious gift of children is granted him, it is in the loving watchful care of these, in the constant mothering of them, that her help is chiefly rendered, sweetness and strength together training them in the way of duty, to the praise of GOD.

But, apart from this, the motherly instinct, the mother's heart, lies ready in the wife. Even the childless, the unmarried, have their share—yes, their powers—in this maternal spirit—gained as it is from Him, in whom, though Incarnate GOD, the milk of human nature flows in abundant measure.

But specially in those daughters of men who have

been taken into the honourable estate of holy wedlock, the germ and grace of motherhood is of the very essence of the "answering mind," the Christian partnership. It is a joy and charm implied in the first purpose for which matrimony was ordained. And whether the dower of blessed children be vouchsafed or not, it is the hope of the home, the longed-for making of the man.

And we at least, who by GOD'S goodness in preserving us, were not left as untimely births, well know that fatherhood is this making of the man, and that the mother's greatest gladness is, whether in expectation or in deliverance, to see his joy thus perfected. We feel, first in noting their mutual happiness, and afterwards in realizing our own, what it is, in "the love of love or child," to find an help meet for us. We see (for have we not reaped the harvest?) how the prayers, and promise, and purity of marriage, bring with them—often long years beforehand—the peace and the benediction of motherhood.

And then, around this and the earliest harmony of spirit, and plighting of vows, cluster all other aids which the gentler sex can render to the mightier. How much he needs all possible help!

> "Thy way is ofttimes hard,
> And toilsome oft thy feet;
> Thine are the days of anxious care,
> When the spent brain reels, or the strong arm tires.
> . . . . . .

Thou toilest daily that thy brood may live,
Cares are thine, cares, and the unselfish mind
Which spends itself for others, and can find
How blest it is without return to give."

Precious to such a one—aye, of a "price far above rubies"—the very gift of GOD—is the "virtuous woman," the "prudent wife." Her character is the filling up of his—his, the satisfaction of hers—theirs, in its mystic union, the moulding and the guidance of lives yet to be.

"He sees within her eyes
That which his nature needs to be complete,
The grace, the pureness, the diviner sweet,
Which to rude souls and strong our life denies.
She views in him the strong
Deep note which adds the fullness to life's song,
High aims and thoughts that glow."

This is not a mere poetic fancy. The words may seem so, but the truth itself is thoroughly practical. As, in the language of Holy Writ, "the wife sees that she reverences her husband," so, according to the same sacred witness, "the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her," assured that "she will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." That is an Old Testament picture, but it is reproduced by the SPIRIT in deeper and richer colours in the New, and painted to the life, so that the reality, under the blessing of Him who ordained it from the beginning, may be seen in every age and in every rank. If the Buddhists speak of the Great Mother

as though in the beautiful idea of the Fatherhood of GOD there were something lacking yet, we Christians know, that GOD, who is a SPIRIT, did make us male and female, and willed us to be dependent on each other for mutual society, help, and comfort, and showed us that motherhood and fatherhood are but two aspects of the one great love in which we are humbly to imitate the strength and tenderness of GOD.

The strength, indeed, is not all on one side—nor all the tenderness on the other. The true man will ever be the gentle man, and the true wife a tower of strength; and sometimes, when the union in this world is over, the bereaved husband becomes mother, as well as father, to his children, or the desolate widow rises in power and vigour for them, while keeping within her and upon her "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

Hence it is that even in his life time, and while he is her succour and defence, there is in her also something of the shield for him. It is as if the kindly motherhood providentially intended for the children were reflected back upon their father, to give him additional reason to "worship" her, as the marriage service encourages him to do, and to make him feel that amid all changes and chances he is upheld by her prayers and her life, and that underneath them both are the Everlasting Arms.

Yes, truly, he has found an help meet for him,

and, as the years run on, the mother's heart grows more and more a heart for him—a heart increasingly busy for others, but still at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathize.

And so in his work, however difficult—in his questionings, however deep—in his cares and troubles, however varied, however distressing—in the perilous moments of his career, when he needs the moral fibre, the clear-eyed chastity, the healthy-minded holiness of a true Christian woman—in the training up of sons and daughters—in the growth of the spiritual life—he finds the mother never forgetting that she is, first of all, the wife—always intent on helping him with whom she is made one.

III.

AT MY MOTHER'S KNEE.

"In many a waking dream of love,
Thou seest her yet upon her knees above;
The vows she breathed beside thee yesternight,
She breathes above thee now, winged with intenser might."

KEBLE.

"LORD, teach us to pray," was the request of the earliest disciples. In learning from Him the lesson, as in every advance of theirs in truth and life, they had to become like little children. They had to be taught the simplest words and the shortest form. But that brief form of humble words became their joy and comfort, the Divine expression of all their human needs and heavenly longings and deepest thoughts, in the aftertime when they were no longer "babes in CHRIST," but men "of full age," and ripe experience, and world-wide ministrations. And that prayer which the LORD had taught them was the heritage of the whole Church—suited for every age, and each separate soul, and all conditions of men. The little children were to learn it, and young men and maidens had to keep up its use,

and fathers and mothers would be helped and consoled by it all their life long. But if it was to be the comfort of manhood, it must be the habit of youth; and if it was to be the habit of youth, it must be begun in childhood. It could not be commenced too early. The first stages of infancy, indeed —the time at which this vast family of GOD has no language but a cry—can have no instruction in prayer, though every little one, after its baptism into CHRIST, has an interest and share in that heritage of the Church, and in heaven its angel doth alway behold the Face of our FATHER which is in heaven. During those happy months, moreover, his guardian-mother watches over him, and entreats GOD for the child. And she understands him, even as the Heavenly FATHER does, when as yet there is no speech—understands his wants, his wishes, and his griefs—understands the first beginnings of his baby language, and pours her sympathy and joy on him,

> "Locked in her arms, his arms across her flung
> (That name most dear for ever on his tongue),
> As with soft accents round her neck he clings,
> And, cheek to cheek, her lulling song she sings.
> . . . . . .
> But soon a nobler task demands her care:
> Apart she joins his little hands in prayer,
> Telling of Him Who sees in secret there."[1]

How faithfully that duty is fulfilled by most

[1] Rogers.

Christian mothers, the children's prayers in every place bear witness. And oftentimes in the case of rough men and careless women, whose lips and hearts have long forgotten to pray, we discover, from the way in which they put their hands together and close their eyes in times of sickness and sorrow, that after all they once had mothers to instruct them how to speak to GOD, mothers to mourn for them when they wandered away, and to go on with those unwearied intercessions for the wanderers which scarce any but a mother can persevere in.

But with many, very many of us, such prayers as those were blest, not merely in recalling us from sin, but in keeping us straight and raising our tone for life, and proving to us the reality of our religion and the goodness of our LORD. Is not this the experience which we gained in those early days which leave indelible impressions?

1. At my mother's knee, says the member of CHRIST, I learnt practically that there is ONE above Who hears and answers prayer. It was borne in upon me that it was not to her that my devotions were offered; for it was not at her feet, but at her knee that I knelt, and she knelt humbly with me, and we prayed together to our FATHER. And such prayer to the unseen GOD was not, in that companionship, a dull, dry task. That which we often have to learn again afterwards—that "he that cometh to GOD must believe that He is, and that

He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" —came to us in early childhood as a sort of home truth. With mother, we felt encouraged to lift up our hearts to GOD as our hope. We could not doubt of His existence any more than we could doubt about our own; but, besides, knowing that He loved us, we spoke, as His "beloved children," to Him, and availed ourselves day by day of that HOLY "SPIRIT of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, FATHER;" that is, FATHER Who art dear to us, and very good. Prayer is altogether an act of faith, from first to last. But in the child's mind it is founded upon, or joined with, a sense of GOD'S love, which is just as real a thing as a sense of mother's love. And when we grow up to manhood, and put away childish things, we do not lose the childlike spirit of dependence on an invisible and gracious GOD; far from it; unless self-love, self-conceit, self-worship, or self-indulgence be hiding from us the great things which He has done, we shall feel that His loving kindness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life, and that, though He is unseen, He is ever near for us to call upon Him. At my mother's knee, says the Christian, I first began to speak to Him, Whom, having not seen, I love.

2. There, too—such is the thankful thought of many a one—prayer became a *habit* of my life. Mother never forgot it; and though I did not always

like prayer (let us be honest about this) it was always a delight to be engaged with her. One of the petitions of earnest parents is that their children may have sweet dispositions and holy habits. To be disposed to what is good, we must have that which is good kept before us, not only as a duty, but as an attractive thing. And every wise mother would avoid putting upon her child as an irksome task, that which can draw him to GOD, and bring GOD'S grace to him. And as religious habits are formed by religious acts, no Christian mother would allow any pleasure, least of all her own, to hinder the religious acts of her child. These should be maintained in him as part of the wholesome training in the way, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Surely, it is not too much to say that mothers who teach the *rule* of prayer may trust that one who has been taught it, will not allow any difficulty to keep him from its regular fulfilment. Daniel was still a child[1] when carried off to a distant land, but he had made that rule so absolutely a part of himself, that not even the awful dread of being torn in pieces in the den of lions could prevent him from kneeling on his knees three times a day.

3. But there was another blessing in that habit of prayer, acquired so early—another blessing connected with mother's memory. Under the encouragement of that dear serious face of love,

[1] Daniel i. 17.

the sins of childhood were shown to me as real, and I was helped to confess them to GOD. A tender (not morbid) conscience, appealed to and appealing to us, each day, is a good gift coming from above: but those who, in the beginning of our life, drew us to listen to its voice, and to seek its witness, were surely instruments and angels of GOD towards that heavenly aid. And to them, under Him, we owe it that our souls needed, in after life, no sorrowful conversion, but rather the deepening of humility and the daily acknowledgment of sin. Oh that those who are mothers now, would show some patience in the few minutes of their children's prayers, remembering how the happiness and peace of later years may depend upon the early knowledge of the sinfulness of sin, and of the love of the SAVIOUR!

4. Of the many meditations which this really great subject opens out to us, there is just one more about which a word or two may be said to some of those who know what it is to have had a good mother. When the old home was broken up, and loneliness and care made common work full of trial, the memory of the simple but most true prayers she taught you, helped you again and again to go and tell JESUS, as if you were a child once more. Ay, sometimes grown-up men have been kept from utter unbelief—from final shipwreck—by this one sheet anchor, which goes down deep into our lives. An American statesman once said: "I should have

been an atheist if it had not been for one recollection —and that was the memory of the time when my departed mother used to take my little hand in hers, and cause me on my knees to say, 'Our FATHER which art in Heaven.'"[1]

Can we not feel that such memory "still outlives many a storm," and that when we have spoken to Him about our griefs and temptations, we must thank Him for her who gave us, long ago, the bent towards these faithful and consoling petitions, and commune gratefully with her blessed spirit. Time, oh mother! has run on and left me without thee. But GOD has not taken from me the blessings which He sent me through thee. He has not suffered time to hurt me.

> "Time has but half succeeded in his theft,
> Thyself removed, thy power to soothe me left."[2]

---

[1] John Randolph. See Smiles' "Character," ch. ii.

[2] Cowper, on the receipt of his mother's picture.

IV.

THE BEGINNING OF EDUCATION.

"Children, like tender osiers, take the bow,
And as they first are fashioned always grow."

DRYDEN.

CHILDREN are to "learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents." But, in order to this, how carefully should the parents teach—how thoughtfully should the parents "lay up" in store for their children, not merely of this world's goods, but specially of the stores and treasures which will last!

No one, except under very peculiar circumstances —when GOD provides—can take the place of the parents in those early stages of Christian training. A nurse indeed, who truly and purely "cherishes her children,"[1] may be their helper for life. The very fact of their being called *her* children, shows that she stands in a sort of motherly relationship to them, and when she faithfully and unselfishly acts up to this, GOD'S blessing rests upon her and

[1] 1 Thess. ii. 7.

them, and they are bound together in a very sweet and enduring affection. But the position is often so terribly abused, and the responsibility so shamefully forgotten, that nursery days are the commencement of a life of sin: the little ship is wrecked as soon as launched.

But as every right-minded mother would wish to nourish her own child, cost what it may of trouble or of pain to herself, so would it be her delight to be the child's first teacher, and to care, not only for its steps in reading and writing, or its exercise in memory, but also for that which is meant by the larger and more comprehensive term of its "education." This cannot be left for school, even the most elementary. The training which might be given in the home by the father and mother is simply invaluable, and, if neglected then, can hardly be obtained afterwards. O priceless beginning, worth any sacrifice, all possible labour!

> "Blest infant! whom his mother taught
> Early to seek the LORD,
> And poured upon his dawning thought
> The day-spring of the Word;
> This was the lesson to her son,
> Time is eternity begun:
> Behold that mother's love." [1]

The duty and the pleasure—ay, and the later reward too—will fall chiefly to the mother. The

[1] Montgomery.

father, as a rule, is too busy to make this his constant work. He is toiling for the family in other ways, and cannot be expected to devote much time to this; though he is a happy man if he can take some part in it, and a selfish and short-sighted man, if he utterly neglects it, at all events in its higher aspects.

For, after all, the points in which a child's education chiefly consists, and for which it depends almost entirely on home influence in early years, are matters more of the heart than of the head—matters, too, in which the other inmates of the home are the very first to profit or to suffer, according to the child's advance or declension.

Which of us, looking into ourselves, or looking out from ourselves to the outer circle of the family, the school, and the world, cannot see what a deep and wide power for good or for harm is vested in a mother, during the seed-time of childhood and youth? Let us glance briefly at the points we speak of—the points in which a thoughtful countrywoman of ours[1] has given counsel to the women of England—but on which any Christian who reflects will arrive at much the same conclusions.

1. Who, for instance, can over estimate the importance of *truth*, in the formation of character? Who can fail to see, that nothing is more necessary from the very first? To speak the truth from my

[1] Miss C. M. Yonge.

heart is one of the greatest duties in life—one of the habits most rich in blessing to those about me—one of the deepest sources of happiness for myself. This goes far towards making the nobleness of a man. This is at the very root of honesty. This is the centre of sincerity, itself enlightened by the fear and love of GOD. This is the check of evil, which, without this, would grow double. This is the "glory and grace" of all right shame. This is the following of the LORD, up to His light. This is the golden virtue, by which, for His sake Who is "the Truth," man may be "established for ever."

Now, it is not too much to say, that truth never springs up as a full-grown plant. It is a seedling first, and needs close watching, careful tending, much watering (often with tears), sometimes the rebukes of love. How much of its cultivation we owe to our mothers! How many children, boys, and men, fail utterly in it, because their mothers had not the courage to reprove, or the patience to teach, or the grace to lead the way! In most of us, surely, it rests on Christian culture. Among the uneducated falsehood is awfully prevalent, though we feel instinctively that in the upper classes it is more disgraceful. This land of ours, happily, has a bias towards truth, a love of truth, a respect for truthful men. May the mothers do their part towards the preservation of this national treasure!

2. Closely connected with this, and indeed flowing from it, is the quality of *trustworthiness.* This affects the life and growth of character out of sight. It is the contrary of eye-service and lip-service. It is the grace of the schoolboy, leaving the restraints and examples of home, but never forgetting them—the grace of the soldier, set in a post of danger without distinction, which yet becomes to him a post of honour and of Divine praise—the grace of the nurse, called to vigilance when other eyes are bound in sleep, and acting on the remembrance that though GOD'S love is needed first, human care comes next, and close upon the others—the grace of the man of business, the steward, the tradesman, the assistant, working neither as men-pleasers, nor self-pleasers, but always in the spirit of that health-giving, heart-searching word, "Thou GOD seest me."

Here, surely, is a grace, which, on its earthly side, is thoroughly home-grown—a grace which every good mother will foster in her own. Who can tell what happy results may not flow from such parental cherishing and care, and from that which, after all, dictates and maintains it—a parent's *love?* How calm and glad are the trustful father and mother—

"Who, out of sight,
Know all is right,
One law for darkness and for light." [1]

[1] "Lyra Innocentium."

Trustworthiness arises, in part, from trust. Who does not desire to be trusted? Who, except the utterly base, does not feel himself the better for being trusted? Who does not know, perhaps in his own life, certainly in the lives of others, the joy and help of being trusted again, after a fall or a defeat? "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child," but it made me feel a man, to be trusted to keep my promise, and to be put upon my honour, even in little things. "Dear mother," says the man when he has "put away childish things," "how can I thank you enough for helping me, by loving confidence, to be conscientious?" "FATHER of mercies," cries the penitent, "after all my sins and shortcomings Thou hast trusted me once again, and by Thy grace my life of liberty shall even yet be a life of loving duty in Thy most holy sight."

3. And so we are brought to think of that which marks, from infancy to age, the onward path—the rule of obedience. As was said, loving duty is set before us. It cannot of course be expected that every one should do his duty at once in a loving spirit. But cheerfulness is an element of true love, and each can learn, and should learn from a child, to fulfil his duty cheerfully, however much against the grain. How much may be done towards this by a true mother! At first she exacts instant obedience, cost what it may of pain to her child,

of discomfort and trouble to herself. Gradually she finds in the child a readiness to do according to her wishes, though the reason is not plain. Then the habit is created of conforming to authority, of obeying orders with alacrity. After a while, if the mother has set about her teaching work in the right way, for the higher good of the one she loves, and for GOD'S glory, the principle is lifted up to the sphere of the soul, and, ere the man has reached his prime, he is able to say, with George Herbert,

> "O let Thy sacred will
> All Thy delight in me fulfil!
> Let me not think an action mine own way,
> But as Thy love shall sway,
> Resigning up the rudder to Thy skill."

4. And once more, in harmony with this will of GOD, is the control of the temper. Some of us assuredly know, in our manhood, how much we owe to the guides of our youth, the hearts by which our infancy was nurtured, for this power of self-restraint. It is true that there are natural forces at work, and that irritability and sullenness are often bred of sickly health and nervous excitement. But there are mothers who have a tender hand and a winning patience for natures thus constituted, and who also seize the fitting time to show that, after all, the fretfulness and gloom are blameworthy, and by their prayers and warnings wean

them from their moodiness, bringing JESUS near to these sufferers from passion. As there was healing of old for the enraged—a casting out of the dumb spirit by the calm HOLY SPIRIT of GOD—so is it still.

> "So waits the LORD behind the vail,
> His light on frenzied cheek or pale
> To shed when the dark hour is gone."

What a comfort for us afterwards! How gratefully for His goodness in quelling our temper, how gratefully for "parental bearings kind," do we offer up our thanks!

Long after mother has passed to Paradise she may be allowed this threefold blessing—the abiding gratitude of her child; the knowledge that her child acts ever upon principle, through that early training in the home; and the assurance that her child is walking in truth, and coming nearer to her, in union with the LORD. Sometimes, too, the influence of her light and leading is shown, even in the sceptical and fashionable world, as evidently the lode-star, the beacon on the rock, for the one whom she had loved and taught. Witness the nobleman of our day, distracted with business, but holding on to the better way, because, as he was not ashamed to tell his companions, his mother was never out of his mind for an hour; or the young man whose mother had died twelve years before,

and who had become almost an infidel, but still confessed, "One thing I cannot get over—my mother's good life."

But often also, by His mercy, here on earth the mother recognizes that her labour and her patience and her intercessions have not been in vain. For to her it is given not only to discern the quietness and the diligence of one she dearly cares for, but also to receive loving and thankful service; the son or daughter feeling that there is only one answer to that question about father and mother, "How canst thou recompense to them the things which they have done for thee?"

V.

THE CENTRE OF LOVE.

"The quiet happy face that lighted up,
As from a sunshine in the heart within,
Rejoicing whomsoever looked on it,
But far more whomsoever it looked on."

MRS. HAMILTON KING.

GOD Himself is the centre of all love: for GOD is love; the source of it in all; the highest object of it for all; the fire of all love that is pure and true; the final and complete satisfaction for all who, whatever else they love, love Him the best and first.

But it is His will and His pleasure that on earth love, even towards others, should be the "bond of perfectness," and that, in our human homes and families, there should be, for this love, powers of attraction, "formed after" Him, "the Pattern of all those."

And as in the home the father represents for the children the grave yet merciful authority of GOD; so is the mother intended to be, generally found to be, the type of that Divine Love, which draws and subdues all things to itself, and tends to make

all happy, all harmonious. Who likes to see the mother set aside? Or who does not feel that cruelty in a mother offends against nature, as well as against grace; and that ingratitude or coldness towards a mother is one of the basest of sins?

Where GOD'S order is followed, love, gathering round the mother, is an earnest of peace and joy, and also of that increase of charity towards others, which, like ever-widening circles on the water, suggests in the first instance, depth and intensity. On the mother that affection is concentrated. The delight, as well as the duty, of the husband is to love and to cherish her. The sons, though soonest separated from their mothers, feel for her the deepest and most chivalrous regard, knowing that, near or far, they are always close to her heart, always sought for and desired, always commended to GOD. To her daughters, who can be so dear a companion; who such a pattern for life; who such an object for imitation; who such a nest in infancy, childhood, or youth; who so worthy to be gratefully, constantly, tenderly tended? Among the servants of her household, though she shrinks not from reproof or warning in due season, the spirit of love is ever uppermost in her, and finds the one blessed response; the very warning and reproof being recognized as in truth prompted by the same heavenly grace, and calling for the same thankful return.

Instinctively, it is felt that—

> "Here is one who over all the earth
> Is worshipped and is blest,
> Who doth rejoice from holier springs of mirth,
> And sorrows from a deeper fount of tears,
> On whose sweet bosom is our earliest rest,
> Whose tender voice that cheers
> Is our first memory, which still doth last
> Thro' all our later past." [1]

Experience varies in us all; but, as has just been suggested in the poet's words, there is a general sense of the loveableness of a mother. Let us try to analyze it a little, reading between the lines the things which are sacred to ourselves, and thoughts too deep for tears.

First, there is the natural position, into which none but the actual mother can enter. Even in the pathetic bequest from the Cross, we realize that the blessed Mary does not take the place of the beloved Salome. And though we recognize the goodness of GOD in granting to the bereaved and the orphan human-hearted helpers, helpers full of a Divine compassion, we know that the complete bond is reserved only for one relationship. It is in the giving of birth through sorrow, that the secret lies of the mother's unmeasured sacrifice of self for the child of her joy and hope, and of the indissoluble links between them both. It is only

[1] "The Ode of Life."

GOD that can love thee "more than thy mother doth," and her peculiar privilege, both for giving and receiving affection, can never be assumed by another.

Again, we think of her unwearied service—of the ministrations to the new born babe; the care for the babe unborn; the work through the years of growth, with all its delighted condescension, to the washing of the feet, and the bathing of the wounds; the contact with the perilous sickness, and the long hours of the needle; the mornings and evenings of intercession; the days of steady and often thankless teaching; the labours of self-denial; the pains of a weakened body conquered by the unwearied patience of a devoted soul. Reflecting on all this—though sometimes, to our shame, only in our mature life—we know what a claim it has upon the best and truest love of our heart.

Then, too, except in the debased—in those who have forgotten their maternal ways—the very speech of a mother is winning and persuasive. No need of loud talking, of harsh commands, even to the rebellious. Such language is alien to the mother's spirit. Her voice, as poor King Lear says, is—

> "Ever soft,
> Gentle, and low: an excellent thing in woman."

She, of all women, keeps to this. It is one secret of her influence; one element in her winning,

constraining power. The memory of it, long afterwards, makes silence in the heart, with strong crying and tears. The sound of it clears away the gloom of the house, and reawakens trust and hope, and renders affliction more bearable, and enhances the pleasures of life. Yes, it has literally a magnetic force, taking us into the mother's inmost heart, and teaching us gently to love it, always to cling to it. For advice, for practical counsel, for the affectionate reproof, for the endearing words of farewell, "she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness."

And, once more, where that heart is really filling the place which the LORD intended for it, there will be at work that spirit which requires no voice, no outward utterance—personal holiness. This lifts the standard of GOD in the house. This is the example which tells on all who dwell there. This shows the children the beauty and excellence of the Christian character. By love and faith, by prudence and modesty, by growth in grace and in the knowledge of GOD, and in the fruits of His SPIRIT, she moves forward on the heavenly way. "Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her."

And from them all, sooner or later, comes that blessing which is higher than praise; the blessing which gives love for love, and knits heart with heart, in "the fellowship of the HOLY GHOST."

VI.

THE EMBLEM AND STAY OF PURITY.

"Happy he
With such a mother! faith in womankind
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
Comes easy to him."

TENNYSON.

THERE are two pictures very familiar to us—Dante and Beatrice, S. Augustine and Monica.[1] Each of these pictures represents the power of the chaste and devout to quell and purify the turbulent passions of men. Each assures us that in various relationships of life GOD grants the privilege to the gentler sex,

"Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words,
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man."

Each shows us how true love for the virtuous soul

[1] It is remarkable that in both these pictures the artist, Ary Scheffer, has painted his own mother.

can ennoble the heart and lift the eyes of men for finer issues and a course above the world.

The pictures, indeed, are very different from each other. The calm worshipful face of the mighty Florentine suggests the preventing grace of GOD, shed forth from the angelic beauty of a woman; while the stern look on the countenance of the greatest of Churchmen reminds us that he had needed the discipline of penitence, ere the saintly spirit of his mother drew him, by the Divine blessing, to peace in the highest service.

Such love for the pure is always an elevating thing; and if the one picture teaches us that, with many men, sincere attachment to a Christian maiden is the best preservative from defiling sins, we learn from the other that it is at least the purpose of the LORD to give all of us a pattern of purity in the mothers of our flesh, to keep us from falling, or to help us, after our falls, to arise and go to our Heavenly FATHER.

What an emblem of this precious grace, what an aid to its protection and increase, the young man possesses in his mother! To him she is the first of women—the one in whose presence he could speak no word of shame—the one who, present or absent, calls him to chivalry. Years afterwards, when he looks back upon his own time of courtship, his own married life, he sees how much she had to do towards his being drawn

> "To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
> And worship her by years of noble deeds,
> Until he won her."

What a strength for the battle of life his mother is to him from the very beginning! Her counsel at home, the letters which follow him so closely, so constantly, the assurance of her prayers, the memory of her example, the influence which remains when she has passed away—these are the best human things which, like water from the mountain of GOD, keep fresh for him "the white flower of a blameless life."

And the daughters, too, how much they owe to her! A mother's delicacy and refinement, her words of warning, though from cheerful lips, her watchfulness over them at home, and amid the unsuspected snares and dangers of society and the polluting subtleties of literature,[1] her never-

[1] Some mothers, even good women, do not realize the awful peril of their daughters at the dance or in the novel. It is no mere Puritan fear which says that a snake lies hid even in the short grass of a smooth lawn. Young girls have had reason to be grateful all their lives for the rule which kept them in their mother's sight at evening parties, and in the reading of fiction. The knowledge of evil is not prudence. And the roughness of amusement, the coarseness of wit, too often found in these days, even in the higher circles of English society, would never be tolerated if English mothers would be really prudent for their daughters and outspoken with their sons, who, in their secret hearts, are always ready to attend to their wishes and advice.

wearied love, self-sacrificing, and therefore generally passing the love of *men*—who can tell what priceless boons these are in the formation of womanly character?

In every rank, from that of the Queen to that of the cottager, it is the mother from whom both sons and daughters learn the glory of the white Cross, the beauty of the shining life which dies to sin and self, and saves and brightens others.

Her position, her authority, the very expression of her face, are continual reminders that "marriage is honourable," and that acquaintance with nature, without the knowledge of sin, is a daily reassuring illustration of the Scripture truth, that "to the pure all things are pure."

Two or three words to those who have passed the time of necessary dependence on a mother, but who would never willingly fail in duty or thankfulness to her.

Do not lose sight of the model. Your imitation of it brought you to your best. Self is such a subtle thing that we are apt to take credit to ourselves for firmness and self-restraint, when all the while we not only had (above all) Divine grace to keep us straight, but also, on the human side, a pure and blameless example, which gave us a bent and bias towards the higher and happier life. It is a good thing to return special thanks to GOD for the patterns and guides which He granted us from

our earliest years.[1] Even if at the time the rebuke of our youthful desires seemed almost harsh in its severity, we had reason to rejoice for ever that we heard the reproof of life, and were enabled to abide among the wise. Once in his youthful prime a prince of France had shown but the first beginnings of weakness towards the indulgence of self among fair women. Yet, said Blanche of Castile, his mother, "I had rather he were dead than that he should commit sin." And he lived to be the soul of chastity and honour, a devout and courageous king, the great S. Louis.

Again, if sometimes, as you get older, you have painful discernment vouchsafed to you, be not disheartened or turned away because that model is no longer the perfect thing it seemed to you before. For the ideal, after all, was GOD'S gift to you. The mother, as He meant her to be, was a perfect woman, nobly planned. But each earthly mother, even the Blessed Virgin herself, falls short of the glory of GOD, and has her faults and failings, which human selfishness and human pride, apt to belittle, will often exaggerate, in order to make excuses for itself. Or, even where these are absent, it is true that the vision of our childhood does sometimes "die away,

[1] In Bishop Andrewes' "Devotions" the Thursday in each week is specially marked by such a thanksgiving. If Christian people would have the patience to use those "Devotions," they would, after a while, find them the greatest possible help.

and fade into the light of common day." Yet let us remember that again and again the mother's heart and the mother's life are just what they were to our filial thought, calling still for reverence and imitation.

Once more, remember what a responsibility attaches to those who, whether ideally or actually, have such an example of holy living, such a call to personal purity. It is true, of course, that GOD does not give a man a good mother in order that he may have the more to answer for. In reality, the blessing is not peculiar to a few; for GOD'S desire is toward all the children of men, and in His loving purpose every one born of a woman has one at least to care for him, and to train him to be sober, temperate, and chaste. But it is a terrible thing to set aside such guardianship, and to be none the better for it. If He gives His angels charge concerning thee, and yet thy heart turns aside to join the rebels and the aliens, what a resistance of grace is here! And surely there is also an angel in the house, not lightly to be despised, since she keeps the night-watches for GOD, and in His Name bids thee "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

Cherish still, whether in companionship or in recollection, the wife of your youth, the mother of all your days. Keep evermore, like the men in those two pictures, the upward look, which expresses

alike the past blessing and the blessed future, the continuous preservation or the later renewal, both the higher life and the boundless hope, of "the pure in heart."

VII.

BRIGHT DAYS.

"There groups of merry children played,
There youths and maidens dreaming strayed;
O precious hours! O golden prime
And affluence of love and time;
Even as a miser counts his gold
Those hours the ancient timepiece told—
Forever, never,
Never, forever."

LONGFELLOW.

THE Christian bride, as she approaches the altar, realizes fully the meaning of our poet when he says—

"There is an awe in mortal's joy,
A deep mysterious fear
Half of the heart will still employ,
As if we drew too near
To Eden's portal."

And the Christian mother, remembering this from her own marriage-day, finds, as her life goes on, other causes for the mingling of seriousness with rejoicing. But rejoice she does, and her joy is so

deep and varied, that all the members of the household may learn to enter into her joy.

Among the fruits of the SPIRIT, joy stands between love and peace—joy, the outcome of love, the earnest of peace. All three are fostered in the family by the true wife and mother. Love is her very life. Peace she is ever cherishing. Within her is a well-spring of joy. It is joy to her to see the increase of love—joy to find in the harmony of all hearts at home the peace which comes of God—joy to perceive in herself, as the LORD'S blessing on her labours, the growth of true peace of mind—joy to ascertain, from many practical proofs, that love is its own reward.

Superficially, perhaps, it is true that in our chequered life the bright and glad days are few. But joy and sorrow are so providentially blended together, each so closely fraught with blessing to us, in the purposes of GOD, that a double benediction is offered to us, joy out of suffering, suffering giving place to joy.

It need hardly be said that the mother's portion is thus abidingly happy, only through grace. Apart from this, her cares and pains and grief and loss might well weigh her down. But grace not only upholds her but enables all things to work together for her good, since faith and hope are in her heart. Quietness, perhaps, is left behind, but peace remains as the secret consolation of GOD to all who walk in

penitence and love. If the great poet of heaven and earth caught the true spirit of Divine encouragement when, after the fall, he made the archangel say to the first father of our race, and through him to Eve, the leader in transgression,

> "Add faith,
> Add virtue, patience, temperance; add love,
> By name to come called charity, the soul
> Of all the rest; then wilt thou not be loth
> To leave this paradise, but shall possess
> A paradise within thee, happier far"—

we may feel that the mother who is a Christian may turn all events and crises of her life into occasions of thankfulness, while knowing all the while that this is not her rest, but that she is moving on to the rest which remaineth for the people of GOD, and to the everlasting felicity of His chosen.

Then, though in her "travail she hath sorrow, yet as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." Then, if she has trouble in the training and teaching of her children, hope helps her forward to the thought of their education completed and their characters formed. Then, in their health and growth she has joy, and in their recovery from sickness, joy, and in their preservation amid all sorts of peril, increasing joy. Then, as they go forth into life, aided by her prayers and her advice, she has no greater joy than

to know that they walk in truth; and if their hearts be wise and pure, her heart shall rejoice over them. Yes, and even if she be bereaved of her children, the humble trust that they are in the hands of GOD consoles her, and though sorrowful, she is always rejoicing. And throughout, though GOD is the giver of this continual cheerfulness, the secret of it is self-discipline.

And discipline, first applied by the mother to herself, becomes fruitful when applied by her to others, bound up with her in the life of home.

> "For discipline is love, whose light hath made
> All like herself."

So that the cause—certainly one chief cause—of the bright days at home is the mother's work, mother's unselfishness, mother's care, mother's Bible teachings, mother's wise rules and affectionate correction.

It is from her, or at least through her, that happiness spreads through the household. The joy which GOD has planted in the heart is a seed of joy to others. What might children not expect from one, whose love, like that of David Livingstone's mother, "had no crust to penetrate, but came beaming out freely like the light of the sun?"

With such a mother "the children's hour" must be the best of the day; and the boy's studies shared with her, full of attraction; and the elder

sons' interests, in amusement as in work, made her own, a delight to them; and the daughters' daily life, centred in her companionship, finding sunshine in it.

Administered by such a mother, the loving chastisement of the faults of childhood and youth brings gladness after it: like mercy, that heavenly quality to which it is akin, it is twice blest.

Such a mother aims at the higher happiness of her children; but being a thorough woman she takes also a natural delight in them—in the pretty ways of the babe, the first steps of the infant, the games of the little ones, the entertainment of each successive age.

To her the marriage of any child of hers reflects her own great happiness; and the gift of children's children opens out to her maternal heart fresh stores of delightful hope.

And so, as she has ever aimed at parting with her old self, and at making the Divine purpose her own, she has, all the days, the abiding gladness of the peace of GOD, and the reward of her love is the joy of her LORD.

VIII.

BY THE SICK BED.

"Thou leanest o'er thine infant's couch of pain,
It breaks thine heart to see
The wan, glazed eye, the wasted arm, that fain
Would reach and cling to thee;
Yet is there quiet rest
Prepared upon the Saviour's breast
For babes unconscious borne on Calvary to be blest."

KEBLE.

WE all feel, by a sort of natural instinct, that if we must have illness, we would rather be ill at home, in a house familiar to us, amid well-known faces, and under the eye of our mother.

This craving is a part of the nature which GOD has given us, and, in one aspect of it, marks the mutual sympathy existing between man and her who gave him birth.

In some lives, indeed, as far as this world is concerned, there is an early severing of that bond of affection; and though there is the clinging to home, the longing for home, home's best brightness (humanly speaking) is gone. But often, even then

there is a tender, attractive presence, provided by the goodness of GOD in an elder child.

> "Filled too soon with sweet care,
> And bringing back the voice and air
> Of thy dead mother, thou art set
> An innocent virgin mother, childlike yet;
> Thy baby sisters on thy loving arm
> Sleep fast, secure from harm."

But His mercy generally preserves the mother; and her travail-pangs are an earnest to herself that she may make, should make, all sicknesses and sorrows of her children even as her own, from their very earliest years. It needs no priestly exhortation to bring out this womanly affection. The mother's heart, the mother's habitual instinct, are GOD'S teachers to us—nature deepened through grace:—

> "We see thee by the childish bed
> Sit patient all night long,
> To cool the parching lips or throbbing head;
> We hear thee still with simple song
> Or sweet hymn lull the wakeful eyes to sleep;
> Through every turning of life's chequered page,
> Joying with those who joy, weeping with those who weep." [1]

And thus those who suffer at home betake themselves to her, and those who are in trouble away from home send for her, or long for her if only she might be with them in spirit. Sentiment apart,

[1] Morris' "Ode of Life." The whole of the canto on *Motherhood* is full of pathos and beauty.

each age turns to mother for comfort. The infant, with no language but a cry, is stilled by that loving voice, that loving eye. The little one, just able to utter that name, calls to "mother" from the inner room, and is satisfied in beholding her face. The boy, smitten with fever among his schoolfellows, feels a sense of safety as she enters long wished for. The young lad, sun-struck in the hayfield, is lifted even by the father into the hands of those who can "carry him to his mother."[1] The married daughter, who has made a new home for herself, knows that no one is like her own mother, when sickness befalls her or when "her hour is come." The man who in the midst of life is brought near to death, recalls, in his inner child-heart, the dear love which cared for him of old, and asks for mother in his very delirium, that she may bless him before he die!

And the mother is ready for all this. The child never cries for her in vain, nor is the elder son's appealing look ever disregarded. No deadly disease keeps her away. When the young man is grievously hurt, whose hand so tender, so skilful as the mother's, for binding up his wounds? Who so patient as mother in ministering to a mind diseased, or in cherishing through long years, with a special love, the weak and imbecile? For sudden emergencies, for constant attendance on chronic complaints, for the little ailments of children which yet seem

[1] 2 Kings iv. 18-20.

great to them, for the irritable nerves of the invalid, for the bitter agonies which have in them the beginnings of death, the mother is pre-eminently ready, specially and beautifully qualified. At all such times of ministration she is acknowledged always to be in her proper place. It is the mother's duty which moves her, the mother's heart which explains her devotion, drawn as she is not merely to the specially beloved child, but to each as he needs her help. Not only the promising son, not only the daughter in whom her hopes are centred, attracts her care. Though Napoleon owed everything to the early training and solicitude of his mother, she was often heard to say that, of all her children, he was the one whom she would have least expected to attain to extraordinary eminence.[1] What the mother sees is not future greatness, but the Divine heritage and gift to her and to her husband, their own likeness, a pledge of their mutual love.

Such affection is a part of herself. The object of it cannot be tended too much. It calls for all her regard, all her compassion, all her unwearied diligence. The word which was said to JESUS, "He whom thou lovest is sick," is the same which pierces the soul of the mother, and makes her forget all trouble, all past disappointments, all anxieties as to the coming years, and simply do her best beside the bed of the weary little child, of the suffering or

[1] See Alison's "Europe," vol. v., ch. 20.

unconscious man, as entrusted to her for the best sort of human affection.

Yes, it is the best sort—that which is not only true till death, but utterly regardless of self, following reverently and tenderly up to the entrance of the valley, and watching in faith for the opening of the gate, though left awhile outside. We may feel indeed that—

"Hers was a mother's heart
That poor Egyptian's, when she drew apart,
Because she would not see
Her child beloved in its last agony—

"When her sad load she laid,
In her despair, beneath the scanty shade
In the wild waste, and stept
Aside, and long and passionately wept.[1]

"Yet higher, more sublime,
How many a mother, since that ancient time,
Has shown the mighty power
Of love divine, in such another hour!

"Oh! higher love, to wait
Fast by the sufferer in life's worst estate,
Nor from the eyes to hide
One pang, but aye in courage to abide."

There is something more than womanly tenderness and sympathy in this. Surely we can trace nobler and deeper elements here.

1. It is the love of a heavenly watcher—the love of one who sees the beloved face of her child on

[1] Gen. xxi. 15, 16.

earth, but beholds also the Face of her FATHER which is in heaven; and whose prayer rises to Him with faithful importunity like that of the woman of Canaan, coming to the LORD on behalf of her afflicted daughter. If true to her great position, the mother knows that she is sent to the child, both in sickness and in health, and that for the child she must carry a message upward. It is this which makes the mother of the sick and suffering ever welcome, like a ray of light; she is a very angel of GOD.

2. Again, we have a figure here of the Church's love—accompanying through life's sad and varied trials all her children in the LORD. Strictly speaking, the spiritual motherhood of the Church is derived from the beautiful natural relationship. But it is a relationship which all can understand; and when duly exercised, in obedience to GOD'S purpose, with love, sympathy, and watchfulness, it lifts us up to the thought of the Lamb's wife, His holy Church, Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all.

3. Once more, it has been well said that "a mother's love is planted in the heart by GOD Himself, as a likeness of His own love to us." Far, very far short, of His unutterable regard must the affection even of the tenderest mother ever fall. Yet it is itself the ordinance and creation of GOD; and it must impart to us sweet and blessed truths about

His nature and our privileges. It reminds us that for any one of His afflicted children we who dearly love them can trustfully pray to Him, "Make Thou all his bed in his sickness;" and for ourselves it teaches us that when all earthly love, however perfect in itself, is failing us, we need not fear, since He hath said, "Thou art Mine: I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

IX.

BEREAVEMENT.

"There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair."

LONGFELLOW.

NONE but a mother's heart can fully realize a mother's grief when her child is called away. It is a sacred thing, that special piercing of the soul, and we must treat it with reverence, and learn from it, either for ourselves "while the evil days come not," or in order that we may sympathize truly and kindly with the bereaved. For though it is a sacred thing, we surely need not regard it in the cold and cynical way which Lord Bacon uses in speaking of parents and children. We are interested in their mutual joys and sorrows, for they have to do with our human nature, and nothing which bears on this can be alien to us. Let us think awhile of this—not morbidly, nor as wishing to rake beneath the surface of a secret trial—but as

Christian men should dwell on the experiences around them, and on the afflictions within them.

First, who can doubt the depth and the bitterness of the personal loss? The world seems a different place when the child is gone. It is as if the fragrance had left the flower—as if the beauty were taken out of the landscape—as if the heaven were brass, and the earth iron. Last night there was speech—a little speech, yet full of love—between the child and her who watched beside him. To-day all is still.

> "'Mid sounds of morn that gentle voice is not,
> But in his mother's heart the echo dwells,
> In her dark spirit's silent citadels
> His image sits alone." [1]

Sometimes it is a grief too deep for tears. Till the HOLY GHOST gives utterance, there is nothing to be said. It is very dark and very bitter. Sometimes the bodily strength breaks down, and the stream rises in the heart, and gathers to the eyes, and GOD grants relief by the very act which expresses a comfortless trouble. And sometimes the great grief bursts forth, like molten fire, and shapes itself in simple broken-hearted words to man, in burning words of sincerest prayer to GOD, who counteth all our sorrows, and is Himself—so the Scripture saith—afflicted in them.

[1] Isaac Williams.

And so every real sorrow of the Christian mother is sanctified by the spirit of submission. How much it costs the bereaved to say, "Thy will be done," they only know who have had the conflict of it, the tremendous agony of it. But resignation is a real grace, a real work, not indeed finished at once, often all but ruined near the ground, yet slowly and surely progressing. It expects not consolation at once, not even from "the GOD of all comfort," but simply patience, the readiness to wait upon Him, the willingness to leave all in His hands, the sad assurance—He will not mind its being sad at first—that all, even this trial, is for the best; the belief, so dissuasive from selfishness, so persuasive to a holier life, that "all things work together for good to them that love GOD."

But then such resignation means anything but forgetfulness of the departed. Faith, feeling, fondness, undying affection, fellowship with them in the communion of saints, the forecast of eternal reunion in the LORD, keep them ever in remembrance. The true mother cherishes towards her lost ones the kindness of GOD. The brief space after death is sanctified, not only by devotion, but by quiet care for those who are fallen asleep. Those folded hands, that solemn face, are tended lovingly, and honoured with the tribute of the fair flowers of earth, and the evergreen, which tells of Heaven, and the risen leaves, suggestive of the resurrection. The Christian

woman knows that it is a right instinct to take some thought for that which has been so recently a "temple of the HOLY GHOST." It is but natural to her to express something of the self-sacrificing affection, the sleepless piety, of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah. And though the form of her prayers for them is changed, she still must daily speak of them to GOD, as of those whom her love has followed in their rest, and to whom she will shortly be going. Many a father, of course, has the memorial, deep in his heart, of those who have passed away, and is as tender as a woman, even unto tears, in cherishing it. But daily toil often, through the providence of GOD, occupies his mind, almost to the exclusion, for hours, of sorrowful recollections; while his wife's work, lying at home and among the children, makes the sadness part of her constant occupation, or at least of her constant experience; and it becomes her blessing, as helping her to maintain her union with them, knowing that life cannot separate her, nor death separate them, from the love of GOD which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD.

But in order to this most precious consolation, it is necessary also that these bereavements which rend the heart should mend it also—that the wounding of the character should make it answer more readily to the Finger of GOD, and open it to all His healing hallowing influences. It is a sanctified sorrow, accepted humbly as from GOD, and deepen-

ing, by His SPIRIT'S grace, that spiritual life which is faith, and hope, and love—it is this which is the germ of blessing. "The setting of a great hope," as the prose-poet says, "is like the setting of the sun," but how many a mourner, reflecting on the loss of his nearest and dearest, will acknowledge that the grief which darkened life brought him closer to Him in whom is no darkness at all, and that the chastening of his heart assured him of an undying love, a gracious Presence, better than of sons and daughters. Then indeed "the sun rose upon him," and behold! he saw all things new.

X.

THE MOTHER'S SORROW AND THE PENITENT'S WELCOME.

"Love lit the lamp and swept the house all round,
Till the lost money in the end was found.
Love the king's image there would stamp again,
Effaced in part, and soiled with dust and stain."

TRENCH.

THERE is a greater affliction than bereavement, the grief over a rebellious son or a wayward daughter. Such foolish ones are, in Scripture language, "bitterness to her that bare" them. Many are the anxious days, many the disturbed nights, of those poor mothers who not only hear, but see, the downward course of those they dearly love. The trial is so terrible that if those who cause it did but witness it, they would in many cases turn away altogether from their sin. But very often the beginnings of evil take place away from home, and then the absence is prolonged, and the degradation becomes more complete, and the sorrowful faces of father and mother are seldom, if ever, seen, and the heart

of the wanderer is hardened from the fear of GOD and the love of man.

But all the while the trouble presses greatly on those in the home. The father feels disheartened in his work, and household cares become doubly burdensome to the mother, and all the members of the family feel weighed down by the sense of a heavy loss and a common disgrace.

With the general effects of such profligacy it is not here intended to deal, but only with the pain and shame which is thus inflicted on the one whom all should cherish and make happy—the one who is "the glory of the man" and the lode-star of the children. It has been said that "often a pure-hearted mother will feel the disgrace and wickedness of her son more profoundly than the son himself does even in his most contrite moments"—striking type of the sorrow of the sinless SAVIOUR, as far exceeding the pangs of the guilty conscience.

It is of the *Christian* mother that we speak. What more sad for her than to see one of those to whom she has given birth falling away from truth or purity or soberness? What a disappointment to her constant prayers from his infancy upwards! What an awful sequel for the record of her loving watchfulness, her joyful pride, in his childhood! What a blow to her hopes for his opening youth, for his eternal life! Or, when it is the daughter that goes wrong, in wilful ways or a life of mere

worldly pleasure, what a deep wound is given to the mother's heart! It needs no long description to show what is meant by a son that causeth shame or a daughter that bringeth reproach; or to paint the agony of a loving mother who sees her child bent on the way which leadeth to destruction—who knows that one she has brought into GOD'S world is actually an alien from GOD. Amid such surroundings, under such dark clouds, with such tremendous fears, a parent's life loses all its joy, all its rest.

But there are three things which a true mother will always keep up. Let those of us who are anxious about any look to it that we do not fail in these; for the salvation of others may depend upon it, and our own salvation.

First, we must never give up hope. "Love hopeth all things;" hopeth against hope, hopeth when not a glimmer of light is seen, for "hope that is seen is not hope." It is a wonderful proof of Divine faith that the mother generally keeps on hoping, even when the father has not a good word to say, no longer a kind or compassionate thought to think. The mother, after all, is often more closely an imitator of Him from whom all earthly fatherhood is named and derived; of Him, that "FATHER of mercies," who willeth not that any should perish, and who is ever waiting to be gracious.

But in human hearts, and for poor human weak-

ness, this hope must be expressed—at least to GOD—in prayer. For those whom we love we "ought always to pray, and not to faint." Intercession, especially for those who are nearest to us "in the ties of duty, kindred, or affection," is the privilege of all the baptized, by reason of their royal priesthood. Devout and patient souls have prayed daily for ten or twenty years on behalf of an erring child, and have been heard and answered. Monica, after long perseverance in that labour of love for her then self-indulgent son, was once terribly downhearted about him, and spoke to an aged bishop with tears of anguish and anxiety. But he said to her, "Go thy way: it cannot be that a child of so many prayers can perish." And she never faltered again; and as the years rolled on, she knew that all was well. And do not our modern missions reveal to us, "like precious faith," answers to prayer just as remarkable, sons dead in sins at last delivered to their mother? Only, it must not be forgotten that a course of diligent, ceaseless, loving prayer must be marked now and then at least by the word of gentle exhortation, such as that spoken in our own time by a good mother to her sailor boy, "Take the step that leads to CHRIST."

But there is one thing more, very necessary for all who would pray acceptably, for all who desire to be heard in their supplications for others. The mother must not lose the remembrance of her own

sin. The tender conscience sees this at once in its sense of deserved chastisement. There is a pathetic touch of nature in the cry of the bereaved widow of Sarepta to the man of GOD.[1]

But many a broken-hearted parent, wishing to die because of the ingratitude or ungodliness of children, does not accept the death unto self, which is all-important in the attainment of eternal life. How many a time would our prayers for others, our deep regret for their misdoings, meet with a heavenly response, if we would but consider the secret sins of our own past history as written before GOD, and deeply and finally repent of them. As Shakespeare says, we need "not burden our remembrances with a heaviness that's gone." But true penitence is a vital thing, and as we enter upon it we shall have a lighter, happier heart for prayer.

And so, sooner or later, will come the great reward, the blessing of hope, the answer to the prayer of faith, the lifting up to a new gladness of those who had humbled themselves in the recollection of their own sin, that they might beseech GOD more fervently on behalf of others tied and bound in evil habits.

Not always in the way we wish, but always on some way of the LORD, the response is granted.

[1] 1 Kings xvii. 17, 18.

The prodigal is seen returning; the wanderer is again at the door of the old home; or tidings come from a far land that there were signs of spiritual recovery before GOD recalled His banished.

Oh, joy beyond words to the one whose godly hope and penitent prayers have been so true and faithful to those she loved in the flesh! See, thy son liveth: thy daughter is restored. If "there is joy in the presence of the angels of GOD over one sinner that repenteth," it may well be that she who is indeed an angel in the house will rejoice with double gladness over the recovery of a lost child. It is scarcely too much to say that though the three most pathetic parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, suggest to us the merciful and long-suffering compassion of each Person of the HOLY TRINITY; yet each parable, viewed from its earthly side, though with much of heavenly teaching in it even so, reflects the tender care of the mother in seeking and regaining and receiving again the son or daughter of her love. Oh, sad yet happy face of one restored to spiritual life, catching sight of her who trained his infancy and childhood, and who has no word of blame, no harsh severity, for him when at last he comes back again, but rather the thankful rejoicing that his sinful wanderings are over, and the loving resolution that he shall find no place like home.

XI.

THE BEST CONFIDANTE AND COUNSELLOR.

"The silent joy, that sinks so deep,
Of confidence and rest;
Lulled in a father's arms to sleep,
Clasped to a mother's breast,"

KEBLE.

IT is an untold blessing that those who go wrong should have a mother's patient and passionate intercession for their repentance and return, and her holy and heartfelt welcome when they are at home once more, penitent and desirous of amendment.

But how much they might have saved of her misery and their own, had they from the first confided in her affection and her advice, which were ever ready for them, according to the Heavenly FATHER'S wise and constant provision and ordinance for the family life of His children.

And surely the mother's heart *is* always open to them, able to sympathize with them in all their

cares and troubles, their temptations and their falls, as well as in their hopes and purposes and pursuits.

1. The mother—if true to her name, and to her divine inclinations towards her own—is the most trustworthy confidante, as well for her little children as for her grown-up sons and daughters. To her they can tell their personal troubles, the sins which weigh down their conscience, and feel certain that with her all shall be as sacred as under the seal. If, throughout life, we do wisely to act upon the Scriptural rule, "Confess your faults one to another," where should such confession begin but with her whose love toward us is proverbially great, and whose tenderness is not a human infirmity but a gift of GOD? To her can be told the faults of childhood; to her some, at least, of the sins and offences of our youth. We feel, indeed, by a sort of reverent instinct, that we ought to have a delicacy in repeating to her who is our very ideal of purity some of the things of which we are most ashamed. Those secret sins which are in the light of GOD'S countenance, and which make us blush to lift up our face unto Him,[1] are best confessed either to one's earthly father or to GOD in the hearing of His priest. But in many, many matters of the sort, mother can be told, to our great comfort. Nor is it only to children that that encouraging word, put into the mouth of a Christian parent, brings relief:

[1] Ezra ix. 6.

"Weary soul and burthened sore,
Labouring with thy secret load,
Fear not all thy grief to pour
In this heart, true love's abode.

"Think not all is hidden quite:
Mothers' ears are keen to hear,
Mothers' eyes are quick as light,
Glancing wide and watching near.

"I with boding anguish read
Half your tale ere ye begin;
Bitter drops in heart I bleed,
Penance for your shame and sin." [1]

2. Again, there are mental difficulties. For guidance through these, for spiritual light, for turning them all into occasions for serving and trusting GOD, the mother's counsel is invaluable. A true woman wins the heart and affections, not merely for herself, but for the word and works of GOD—aye, for GOD Himself. Reasoning, and thought, and study of evidence, and the habit of grappling with perplexities, all help us on the way to faith, and, by GOD'S blessing, to faith itself. But it often needs a mother's teaching and example to make us love what we believe. An irreligious mother, of course, cannot make a man love irreligion, though she can warp him away from the love of GOD. Irreligion, be it repeated, cannot be rendered loveable to us, for it is itself a cold and hard thing;

[1] "Lyra Innocentium."

but a Christian mother, whose heart is in her faith, and whose faith is proved by her life, draws her children—even when they are of mature age—to belief and virtue and charity, as *evidently* the "more excellent way."

Holy living, founded on the faith, and expressing it, is her chief instrument of teaching; but she knows also that it is her duty and privilege to give words of hearty counsel, and that these will be listened to, and, in the end, often acted upon. Like Eusebia, in Law's "Serious Call,"[1] the good mother is the wise companion and friend of her daughters, the prudent and cheerful adviser of her sons. And surely, if the superior of a sisterhood is called the Mother, because of the loving care which she is bound to take of those entrusted to her for the combined work of Martha and Mary, we must feel that the one who is really a mother, and from whose beautiful name, sweet in nature and in grace, the name of that other is derived, should love her own "as her spiritual children," winning them to "reverence her as their spiritual mother, with an affection far above that of the fondest friends."[2] Ought any shyness, any diffidence, any feeling of

[1] The chapter on the education of daughters may be thought, in these days, rather strict and severe, but it is full of good sense and Christian principle, and, like the rest of the book, has for its aim a devout and holy life, and withal a bright and blessed one.

[2] Law's "Serious Call," ch. xix.

disparity to interfere with this higher love and its eternal issues? If we could look forward a little and see the abiding effect of such intercourse, and its power to reclaim those we love, years afterwards, we should do our best to cultivate it.[1] A word to the little child about the danger of selfishness or falsehood, a word to the young maiden about the books she should read, a word to the boy at first leaving home about his companions, a word to the grown-up son about the duty of frequenting the House of Prayer—and each word uttered quite simply and naturally in the language of real affection—how good are these for the whole of the after life!

3. Yes, and in the life as it passes—in what we call the pastimes of life—what a help it is when the mother enters heartily into the special interests and avocations of each member of her family! It is indeed often given to her to *form* their peculiar interests. It has been well said by an eminently practical writer,[2] that "in the case of literary men, poets, and artists, the influence of the mother's

[1] John Newton, the friend of the poet Cowper, had led a vicious life as a youth and as a seaman, and long after the death of both his parents he became suddenly awake to a sense of his depravity; and then it was that the lessons which his mother had given him when a child sprang up vividly in his memory. Her voice came to him as it were from the dead, and led him gently back to virtue and goodness.—See Smiles on "Character," ch. ii.

[2] Smiles.

feeling and taste has doubtless had great effect in directing the genius of their sons;" and he refers to Scott, Bulwer, Schiller, and others as illustrating this.

But even in what seem to us much less important matters, maternal sympathy and encouragement are very valuable. A mother can and should share in those interests of her children which refer to games and amusements. So long as these are innocent and right, and involve no cruelty, she ought to make them as her own. To rejoice in the progress of her sons in all that is manly and skilful, and to show that she does rejoice in this; to foster the accomplishments of her daughters, not as worldly acquirements, but as the exercise of useful talents; to further the advance of each in science or in art, in all that is pure and honest and of good report—will be one sure mark of the mother who wishes to show herself the companion, as well as the guide, of her children—one true note of that music of love, which makes other hearts respond, and so creates that harmony which is inspiring to all who hear it.

XII.

PASSING AWAY.

"We need Him most when the dear eyes are closing,
When on the cheek the shadow lieth strong,
When the soft lines are set in that reposing
That never mother cradled with a song.
Then most we need the voice that while it weepeth
Yet hath a solemn undertone that saith—
Weep not, thy darling is not dead, but sleepeth;
Only believe, for I have conquered death."

C. F. ALEXANDER.

THERE comes a day when all this happy confidence, all this helpful counsel, all this hearty encouragement, so far as this world is concerned, must cease. Sometimes, just in the course of nature, in ripened age, blessing and blest—sometimes, in the midst of life, when the power is maturing and the sunshine of love is in the zenith—sometimes, while the little children seem utterly dependent on her, and she herself is scarcely out of her beautiful prime—mother is called away.

Sudden death, thank GOD, is a rare thing, though in such a one as we speak of, a peculiarly sad thing

—saddest perhaps of all, when the life of the mother is given for the birth of the child. But apart from this, the decay and the departure of the precious mother of the family can hardly fail to be among the greatest of all trials. The approach of these, however gradual, marks an epoch in our history.

1. It involves a retrospect. The past seems very sweet to us. We see it in a sort of glory. The troubles are forgotten; and there shines out upon us the picture of one whose whole course for us was love, pity, patience. Not that the character was really perfect, or that we are always made happy by it. But in looking back, we no longer notice the incompleteness, no longer remember the drawbacks to our joy, or think of them only as the fruit of our own unworthiness, our own rebellious pride, unwilling to be ruled even by a mother. We reflect with anguish that the probation, the privilege, is coming to an end, soon to be "blotted from the things that be."

But then such a past is called up, in order to teach us, from GOD, that it is His blessing which has been resting on her all these years, and on us through her. Such recollections form part of the discipline of life, to give us stillness and hope, even in separation, knowing that though we shall be bereft outwardly, we shall not be parted from the love which nurtured us, but rather united closely

to her love in the love of GOD. Our soul is even as a weaned child—

> "When it lies all weak from weaning,
> Yet at rest
> On the breast
> In its gladness leaning." [1]

2. And how shall the interval be spent ere the actual parting? By us, in devotion to her, in prayer for her. By her, in the spirit of resignation and with the heart looking forward. How pathetic, yet how simple, is that intercession for the dying mother!

> "O how soft that bed must be,
> Made in sickness, LORD, by Thee,
> And the rest, how calm, how sweet,
> When JESUS and the sufferer meet!
>
> "Bless her, and she shall be blest;
> Soothe her, and she shall have rest;
> Fix her heart, her hopes above,
> Love her, LORD, for Thou art Love." [2]

And the filial poetry is saved from mere sentimentalism, by its drawing us to filial piety—to little acts of tenderness, and increasing habits of patience, and all watchful attention to her needs and wishes. It is not much to serve our parents loyally, to cherish them with all possible gentleness.

[1] Archdeacon Churton's rendering of Ps. cxxxi.
[2] J. S. B. Monsell.

We know and feel how many things they have done for us which we cannot repay.

And then, all the while we tend those who are so dear to us, their heart is being tended, infinitely more, by Him who has cared for them from their own infancy. To Him the mother's petition is drawn, oftentimes, from the thought of her personal affection for her little one, and that little one's perfect trust in her maternal kindness and goodness.

"My child is lying on my knees,
The signs of Heaven she reads;
My face is all the Heaven she sees,
Is all the Heaven she needs."

For GOD Himself is calling by the mother's voice, the mother's pity; and the mother's heart goes upward with the child's, till her very face is refined and made glorious.

"If true to her, though troubled sore,
I cannot choose but be,
Thou who art peace for evermore,
Art very true to me." [1]

Here is the secret of peace, for herself and for those she loves. Their devotion to her does not drag her down to a mere earthly affection, but rather lifts her up to love them all the more, "with a pure heart, fervently," and to trust them in the hands of GOD.

[1] George Macdonald.

We wonder sometimes when we see a devoted Christian mother, called to leave, and knowing that she must leave, the children who have been her care and joy, able to resign them without any anxiety as to their life when she is gone. But is it not because she knows, through a Divine instinct, quickened by the nearer sense of the other world, that the home of those dear ones is Heaven, and that He who is their Almighty and most loving FATHER, will never leave them, nor forsake them?

3. And so, on either side, the preparation is completed, and the hour comes when we are called to part. Not in despair then, nor with gloominess of heart, but in the shining light of Christian faith blessing a chastened sorrow, we bid farewell, talking of JESUS' Death, and of the sharpness of our death as overcome by Him, the Kingdom of Heaven opened, and endless life beginning.

It creates a great gap, indeed, this departure of the one through whom GOD "made me this soul;" but then my soul, the higher part of me, is not confined to earth, or earthly joys, or the earthly companionship even of a good mother. No, assuredly, the Christian may say to himself, that very companionship which could not be fully satisfied here, pointed me onward and upward, to that holy Home, whence we shall go no more out. Thither must I now all the more simply and earnestly direct my steps, waiting for that day when the Master shall

call for me, and believing that though we all naturally, that is, as made by the LORD, cling to life, yet no one need fear to die who really desires to be with CHRIST.

XIII.

THE LIFE-LONG VOID AND THE LIFE-LONG REMEMBRANCE.

"The record fair
That memory keeps of all thy kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm, that has effaced
A thousand other themes less deeply traced."

COWPER.

To be "as one that mourneth for his mother," is a very type of heavy sorrow. No vanished hand do most of us long more earnestly to touch, no voice that is still would we fain hear with greater desire, than the hand and the voice of a mother departed. There are, indeed, other partings which come to us, not in the same natural order, and which go further towards breaking our hearts and changing the whole current of our lives. But the gentle hand, the winning voice of a mother, unlike those of a second self, are connected with our very earliest infancy. How many a one can say, I think of them as mine in that most distant past when first I realized my own individual self.

And the want of these is felt by us, even if with ever-softening regret, through the rest of life. It is indeed—

> "The loss we ne'er forget,
> The loss which comes to all who reach life's middle way,
> Best dream of early youth, best memory of age."

That it continually abides with us, though we are not always cast down in the remembrance, is evident from the way in which, at certain crises of our after-course, we crave for her presence and counsel and blessing.

When we enter on some fresh work, or among new friends, or in the brightness of a day of special joy, or under the pressure of a great sorrow, or as we are passing into "the valley of decision" with an all-important choice before us, we feel how precious would be one hour of quiet converse with that loving soul who watched our infancy, and wept over the faults of our childhood, and prayed for our deliverance amid the snares of youth.

But, visibly and palpably, that strengthening tender heart cannot be with us more. We must fight the battle alone, without that vigilant eye, that warning and encouraging word.

Whichever way we look—to the past, the present, or the future,—that withdrawal affects us. The past is fixed, and we begin to live in it, not of course as if the past were everything, or as though

we could not rejoice in the boundless hope, but simply because part of our old self is become a memory. The death of a good mother is a landmark in our lives. Before it, we were on a different level from our after course. We count events from it. A great alteration passed over us as we left that time. As it recedes from us, a sort of barrier, albeit surmounted by the Cross, separates us from the dear old days.

> "We talked of change, of winter gone,
> Of green leaves on the hawthorn spray,
> Of birds that build their nests and sing,
> And all 'since mother went away.'" [1]

And the present, as it opens and never closes, day by day, though saddened by the abiding sense of loss, yet brings the lost one very wonderfully to our side. Her voice seems to speak to us from afar—

> "Weep not for me,
> I still am near."

Her form no longer dwells with us, in our little corner of this troublesome world. But her spirit, as with the LORD, does not appear to us as altogether distant from us. Rather, as living in Him, free from the imperfections of the lower nature and the cares and sorrows and temptations of this earthly scene, she is, to our comfort, an object for our best

[1] Wordsworth.

and highest love, ever remembered in our prayers, ever commemorated before the holy Altar,[1] ever united with us in our acts of highest communion, in our humble deeds of self-denial and of service. And though, in a very true sense, for the years which we are spending now, a glory has passed from the earth, yet Paradise, through mother's presence there, becomes a home-like place, and, because of the LORD'S presence, the beginning of Heaven for her and for us.

But the future is fraught with the deepest joy. As, in the well-known scene described in his "Confessions," S. Augustine says that he and his mother (to whom, under GOD, he owed his soul, and not only his body) spoke together, a few days before her decease, in such a way as to forget those things which were behind, and to reach forth to those things which are before; so in our abiding grief at mother's removal from us, we may, if we will, look quietly forward to that blessed reunion which is promised us in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life; and meditate, not as dreamers, but as men wakened out of our dreams, on that eternal life of the blessed saints, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man.

[1] This was the parting charge of S. Monica to her great son: "Lay this body of mine in any place—let not the care thereof disturb you: this only do I ask of you, that you would always remember me at the Altar of the LORD wheresoever you may be."

It is a great and precious gift to us—this joy out of sorrow, this hope in the midst of loss and because of it. How devoutly can we thank GOD for it, how real a part of our daily thanksgivings is the praise we owe Him for our parents! How continually should we rejoice and give Him blessing for all that our mother has been to us—in her lifetime by proving our gratitude in our devotion to her, and afterwards by considering what she would have wished us to do, and by setting ourselves to fulfil it.

The experience of all differs, of course, in this, as in everything else; but it may be doubted whether there is any matter in which men and women of al sorts agree more fully than in this—that a mother's word is law, that a mother's love is one of our chief possessions, that a mother's influence can scarcely be measured, that a mother's heart is full of goodness towards her children at every age of their life, and that he who would despise or forsake his mother must be reckoned among the worst of men.

Who that has "the root of the matter" in him would allow his own distress or pain, his own peril or temptation, to hide from him the sorrows of his mother, or the recollection of her care and agony and affection for him? "The mother of my LORD" was not forgotten by Him, even in the bitter hours of His Cross and Passion. And it is a true thought, quite in harmony with this, and no mere romance

or fancy, which represents the CHRISTUS in the "Passion Play" saying to His mother in their last sad interview—

> "O mother, mother, who so tenderly
> Hast loved Me, with such perfect motherly care
> Hast watched My life, these three-and-thirty years,
> Receive the dearest thanks of thine own Son.
> The FATHER calls. Farewell, thou best of mothers."

Even so may every man, in the deep of his heart, cherish most gratefully the life, while with him and when parted from him, of her on whom he himself utterly depended, and through whom he has received such continual help and blessing. So may our lives be ever practically grateful, as we dwell on the bright and beautiful memories of the past, and the prayers which have prevailed for us even until now, and rejoice in hope of "some strong bond which is to be."

XIV.

THE MOTHER OF MY LORD.

"Help, Virgin-born!
By Thy own mother's first caress
That waked Thy natal morn;
Help, by the unexpressive smile that made
A heaven on earth around the couch where Thou wast laid."

KEBLE.

THE height and depth of meaning in the name of mother cannot be reached by any one without reference to the Incarnation of the Eternal SON. The great and wonderful truth that He was "born of a woman"—that, humanly speaking, He depended upon her in childhood, that He was her Divine SAVIOUR, and yet her Very Son, that the flesh which He gave for the life of the world was assumed of her substance, and that through this which He took of her all of us were enabled to receive the adoption of sons—may remind us that if we would understand aright the position of a mother, and the love and honour due to her, we must view these (reverently be it said) with the eyes of our LORD.

The poorest and least cultured woman who will thus regard them, gains, in her attitude towards her child, a dignity and beauty which mere child-bearing would not give her. Considered in the light of the manger at Bethlehem, and of the carpenter's house in Nazareth, and of the sorrowful group beside the Cross, and of the fisherman's home whither S. Mary, heart-stricken, betook herself at the bidding of her dying Son, the motherhood even of the humblest has some fellowship with hers, and "the Holy Child JESUS" finds some little likeness in the innocence of the poor babe.

> "What matter if the cheek show not the rose,
> Nor eyes divine are there, nor queenly grace?
> The mother's glory lights the homely face."

The Blessed Virgin is too thoroughly human a mother for us to wish to worship her. Her annunciation, her conception, her delivery, her nursing time, her seclusion from the world, her meditative, patient, loving life, her awful grief, her simple converse with the Church, her absorption into its "unknown yet well-known" history—all make us feel, as by a religious instinct, that, being thoroughly one of us, she could not be Queen of Heaven, or Lady over our LORD. It was for His glory, not for hers—to show Him Very Man, our actual Brother, a real and not a visionary Mediator—that

Christians learnt to sing *Magnificat*, and the blessed company of painters

"Have fixed the Virgin Mother for our eyes."

Though those who seek her help and her intercession go, to a certain extent, upon a truth, the prevailing power of feminine gentleness and grace, yet it is quite overshadowed by a greater truth—that in Him, the Everlasting SON of the FATHER, made Man for us men, we can find complete tenderness, absolute sympathy, GOD'S strength and Man's pity. The perfect humanity of the CHRIST, His human kindness, innate in Him when He was hanging on His mother's breast, His human tears, and weariness, and temptation, and desolation, make us glorify Him both in the Mother and the Child, and trust Him completely as our only Advocate, so that we cannot look for another.

Yet, for His sake, we love to think of her, and to speak of her, with reverence and love, and to learn from her conduct to Him, and from His dealings with her, both in His Godhead and His Manhood, practical lessons for ourselves.

1. As all true mothers in Israel, waiting for His Redemption and His Kingdom, longed even in pain for that marvellous benediction, which was afterwards granted to Mary, so, ever since, has comfort been offered to those in travail, through dwelling on that Holy Nativity which does concern us all.

"If filial and maternal love
Memorial of our guilt must prove,
If sinful babes in sorrow must be born,
Yet, to assuage her sharpest throes,
The faithful mother surely knows
This was the way Thou cam'st to save the world forlorn." [1]

2. Again, the submission of our LORD, not as GOD, but as Man, to the authority of His mother, shows us the holiness and beauty of early subjection to our parents. The law of obedience to them is "the first commandment with promise," even in the Old Testament. How much that promise is enhanced by the great Example of the New Testament, never forgetting, indeed, His own supreme authority as touching His higher Nature, but always showing Himself so thoroughly a Man in His respectful, dutiful, affectionate regard for the wishes of His mother!

3. Again, what encouragement He gives to all true piety! How pathetically He shows us that personal pain, desertion of others, the love of loneliness, should never hinder us from honouring father and mother! It was on the Cross that He spoke those words of deep personal consideration, "Woman, behold thy son!" and then to S. John in her behalf, "Behold thy mother." And He delights to see us caring tenderly, and with a true child's thoughtfulness, for those without whom we had never been.

[1] The Christian Year—Sexagesima.

He loves to mark piety still expressed even by those who suffer pain, and thankfulness to parents shown, not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth, notwithstanding many hindrances and many sorrows.

4. And specially He would have us do our best to soothe the griefs and fears of those who have been accustomed all their life long to console and quiet us in *our* troubles.

> "Who, on CHRIST'S dear mother gazing,
> Pierced by anguish so amazing,
> Born of woman, would not weep?
> Who, on CHRIST'S dear mother thinking,
> Such a cup of sorrow drinking,
> Would not share her sorrows deep?"

But there is one nearer to us. Let me not, while sharing the sympathy of each generation towards the mother of my LORD, forget the one at home, who can claim, from me at least, undying affection, the deepest possible gratitude, patience in weakness and old age, and sympathy at all times.

XV.

THE CHURCH THE MOTHER OF US ALL.

"I love the Church, the Holy Church,
The SAVIOUR'S spotless Bride;
And Oh! I love her palaces
Through all the land so wide;
. . . .
The music of our Mother's voice,
Our Mother's home is there."

BISHOP CLEVELAND COXE.

THESE words of the American Bishop, written too during his earlier priesthood, are but the poetic echo of those words which the HOLY GHOST teacheth by the Apostle of the Gentiles, and those which come to us, by an angel's voice, from the Divine Apostle and High Priest of our profession, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.[1]

From these we learn the glory of MESSIAH'S Kingdom, the Church, and its mystical though real relationship to Him; and also the bond of filial love and filial trust which binds us to CHRIST and the Church—to "our fair Father CHRIST" (as the English poet calls Him) and to His Church, "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife."

[1] Gal. iv. 26; Rev. xix. 7, 8; xxi. 9, 10.

Because of Him, the One "Saviour of the Body," the One Head of the Human Family, His Church (S. Paul tells us, not merely as a doctrine, but as a comfort) is the Mother of us all. It is as "Jerusalem which is above," that she is spoken of under this lovable image. Lo the contrast! Jerusalem in Palestine was the mother-city for GOD'S ancient people, herself in bondage with her children. This, apart from the bondage, was but a type of that celestial Salem; that city which, in its spiritual and eternal aspect, belongs to Heaven, and which was intended for all who dwell on the earth; that city, in which we the baptized have our citizenship, our righteousness, our peace; that city, which to us below appears as the visible Church, the Church of our baptism and our adoption; the Church which the LORD GOD "purchased with His own Blood," and of which we are the very members—in one sense, children of the Church, in another sense, ourselves His Body and His Spouse.

This is a great mystery, but it is full of consolation, as are all real motherly truths; and its consolation, though completely revealed in the end of the age, does actually shine upon us from the first beginning of the Word of GOD, the first beams of that light of hope shed upon fallen man. Eve was so named "because she was the mother of all living," the wife of him from whom sprang the whole race of mankind. And in her, and in her

union, and her fruitfulness, we have, from that early time, a figure of the Church, formed from the pierced side of Him who slept in death to wake again, the Life and Resurrection for us all. CHRIST is the second Adam, and the Church is the second Eve, joined to Him in a spiritual marriage and unity, and enabling all who will, to become members of CHRIST, children of GOD, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. O wondrous second birth! O glorious citizenship! O Mother Church, "fulness of Him that filleth all in all"! Surely, we are not putting the Church in His place. The Church is His Church; the glory is from Him; the wonder is "His work, His strange work—His act, His strange act."

This was the purpose of our LORD in founding the Church—that the children of the world, the offspring of the first man Adam, might be born again, as children of the LORD, members of Him who is not only the second Adam, but the last, the final hope of our human nature; and that, being so born again, we might have, in His Church, a Mother to care for us, one by one, and to shelter us all together.

Granted, that this purpose has been sadly frustrated, that, in days long past, the Church neglected her own, harshly repelled those who might have been hers, treated with cruelty many whom the gentleness of the Bridegroom would have won. Yet

all this was alien to the part assigned her by the LORD. Still, as in His day, the Church knew not what manner of spirit she was of. Yet, always, some members of the Spouse remembered whose they were; some features of the face retained the look of love, and showed that the heart of the mother was there, after all.

And we, in our times, are realizing once more our freedom and nurture in the Church, and the privileges and blessings accorded to us as her adopted children. To those of us at least who own the Anglican Communion, now spread and loved over many lands, the title of "Mother" seems that which exactly suits the Church. Hers is assuredly a motherly care for the little ones; it is hers to bring them to the font, to see to their training, to provide for their education, to teach them plainly, though in words which might be letters of gold, their duty. What might the sons of the Church be, if they wrought out her teaching in their life, learning by her purity and faith, by her courage and discipline, to grow up godly, manly men; never forgetting, amid the world's distractions, the better way; or called back to it, after many wanderings, like the old man who heard a service-bell in the forest!

> "And he followed the sound—for he thought of home,
> And the motherly hand so fair,
> That led him along through the churchyard mounds,
> And made him kneel down to prayer."

And the daughters of the LORD, what is not this tutelage, this loving guardianship, to them? It is beautifully ordered for each of them in the tenderness of the Heavenly King. That tenderness is His, though He makes it hers. He would have each of her daughters feel this.

"Who, but her Mother Church, knows well
The deep-hid springs of grief and joy,
That in the heart of woman swell,
And make that heart, or else destroy?

"Who, but the Church, can every power
Of the true woman nurse to life,
Till, fit for every changeful hour,
Is seen the maiden—woman—wife?"[1]

Yes, and this motherhood is meant for all. The Church's prayers, the Church's lessons, the Church's songs, the Church's special services, sanctifying all occasions of our changeful life, and turning them all to good; these are the practical, not the sentimental, teachings offered to us. These we should ourselves ever value. These we should extend to others—by missions within and without—winning, so far as we can, all nations and each individual, the lost tribes and the lost soul,

"Rebekah's child, and Isaac's homeless son."

And if, as yet, those around us complain, or we in our own hearts feel, that the Church is still very

[1] Bishop Cleveland Coxe.

far from the true motherly spirit, the true following of her LORD, let it be remembered that, whatever may be said, the Church, as we see her, is but the earthly counterpart, and a very imperfect one, of that which has a heavenly origin; and into which (since both are really one) the earthly is being, truly though very slowly, changed. The higher type is above, not below. It is there, not here, that the mother is fully shown. "I saw," says the saintly John, "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from GOD out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

But even here, even among us, yes and of us, the Lamb's wife, the Mother of all souls that really live, is being formed to the beautiful symmetry of holiness and love. Even here she has "the glory of GOD, and her light is like unto a stone most precious," and within her we have liberty and joy.

"I love the Church—the holy Church,
That o'er our life presides,
The birth, the bridal, and the grave,
And many an hour besides.
Be mine, through life, to live in her,
And when the LORD shall call,
To die in her—the Spouse of CHRIST,
The Mother of us all."

XVI.

OUR SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP.

"In Thee for ever, LORD, abiding
I feel that all is well;
Within Thy love for ever hiding,
Who can my gladness tell?"

BONAR.

THE mother of JESUS had a unique position among women, an extraordinary blessing, in the place which she occupied in regard to Him. But we are not obliged to stand aside, and fancy that because hers was such a wonderful nearness, we are, spiritually, at a distance from Him.

In this glance which we are taking at the grace and benediction and responsibilities of motherhood, we must not, surely, either leave out all mention of the Blessed Virgin, or imagine that, in comparison with one so highly favoured, the rest of us are at a disadvantage in entering the circle of the disciples, and seeking to know the Master and Saviour of us all.

No, indeed, that sweet and sacred title may, in

some sort, be shared by every true daughter of GOD. Each of our human relationships, even that highest and holiest one, has its counterpart and complement in the spiritual ties wherewith JESUS unites Himself to all that are His.

In the first place, we are not only friends of CHRIST, not only brethren of CHRIST, viewing Him, and viewed by Him, simply from without. By our baptism we are members of CHRIST: baptized into CHRIST we put on CHRIST, not only as a garment, but as our higher self. He becomes our Head: we belong to Him as really and as intimately as the hands or the feet—even the dusty hands and the bleeding feet—belong to the central life of the body. We, as His members, are allowed to share His sufferings; we can be "in bitterness for Him," not only "as one that is in bitterness for his first-born," but also as those who share His very Nature, and are crucified with Him, and in Him died unto sin.

And this mystical, but very practical fellowship with the LORD, is not merely granted us once for all. It is again and again renewed in that Holy Eucharist, that Sacramental Communion, wherein we, being many, are one Bread and one Body, as all of us partakers of that one Bread. By each penitent and faithful participation of ours He is being formed within us, and we are aided to show forth, in our measure, the graces of His character, the

holiness of His life. The mother lives in her children. Her very features, her peculiar ways, her voice, her virtues, her disposition, are repeated in theirs. And yet each is a separate soul—each has its own surroundings, its own tendencies, its own individual marks; and keeping these, each may yet reproduce, sometimes only in face or manner, the mother. So, in a deeper mystery, may we carry out, amid daily duties, the likeness to our LORD, a growing conformity to His inmost heart; and our life may come to be CHRIST living in us.

And then He is the One who loves us more than our mother doth. We are His very own, tenderly cared for as if we were His only beloved, watched amid all wanderings, comforted in all sorrows, drawn by His rebukes of love, His wise and merciful chastisements, to care for our souls, and to grow in the knowledge of Him. It is all very wonderful, His way with us—really the mother's way, only this in its perfection—the way of discipline, and affection, and fervent care, and gentleness, and purity, and watchfulness—

> "And softer than our mother's breast,
> And closer than our mother's arm,
> Is here the Love that keeps us warm,
> And broods above our happy nest:
> Dear mothers, come, for heaven is best."

So speak the little children who have entered Paradise.

We need not fear the gracious Providence which takes us away from the evil to come; we can always trust our Redeemer for time and for eternity: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

All holy relationships are ours in CHRIST. He makes up to us all that is wanting, solaces us by Himself in every bereavement, shows us that in loving Him we can be eternally satisfied, reminds us in our lonely days that, since He loves us, all is well. If the wife of the noble Greek could say to him—

> "Father to me thou art and mother dear,
> And brother too, kind husband of my heart,"

we need not doubt that JESUS will be all in all to each of us—that He, the heavenly Bridegroom, is the Consoler, the Strengthener, the Bosom-friend of every member of His Spouse the Church.

> "Strange to our ears the church bells of our home,
> The fragrance of our own paternal fields
> May be forgotten; and the time may come
> When the babe's kiss no sense of pleasure yields
> Even to the doting mother; but Thine own
> Thou never canst forget, nor leave alone." [1]

Let us trust Him, in all our needs—love Him best, amid all our affections; so shall we find our prosperity, while all our dear ones are about us, more truly prosperous; and when the hour of adver-

[1] *Christian Year* (Monday before Easter).

sity comes, and some of them are taken away, these things will not seem altogether against us.

Let us conclude with some brief thoughts concerning His glory, instead of thinking only of our consolations. He assures us, in His gospel, that —dearly as He loved His mother, and earnestly as He cared for her, alike in His beautiful boyhood and in His bitter death—He yet desires *our* devoted attachment, the reverent loving service of us all; and that if we will seek to honour Him, He will honour us among the choice ones of His chosen. If, in our dealings with our earthly kindred, we act in such a way as to put self last—if, in the work of our profession, in our answer to the claims upon our time and our conscience, we are trying to labour for GOD, and to please Him first, the words of the LORD will be a daily comfort to us—"Whosoever shall do the will of My FATHER which is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother."

XVII.

A MOTHERLY HEART.

"From Thee all pity flows,
Mothers are kind, because Thou art,
And dost dispose
To them a part."

GEORGE HERBERT.

GLORIOUS titles of fellowship with CHRIST are allowed, by His own distinct assurance, to those who do the Divine will—glorious titles, blending what is beautiful on earth with what is eternal in Heaven. "My brother, and My sister, and mother." And we can well understand how it is that in spiritual work among men, aye, and in tender human work for men, such titles, drawn from the little family circle, gain an enlarged and endearing use.

The Bishop, worthily and lovingly fulfilling his blessed work in the oversight of the Church, may well be spoken of, and looked up to, as a father in GOD. The baptismal sponsors, presenting the little child for the new birth, which is GOD'S act and not man's at all, may reasonably be named, and—were

it not for frequent human irreverence—would be honoured, as God-parents. A sort of higher instinct is getting us to call a college of priests, or a band of devout lay workers for the Church, a brotherhood. And the Christian women who, for GOD'S glory and the good of souls, enter community life, to labour for years in the penitentiary, the refuge, or the home, the hospital, the prison, or the mission, are loved and trusted more and more as sisters. Nor can we wonder that the leading spirit, the one who has authority over the rest for the LORD'S sake, should care for them and be obeyed by them, as the Mother. CHRIST'S work of faith and love is fostered by these dear human names, and the life of grace delights to attract and to control by the touch of nature, sanctified to the service of GOD.

But the employment of this title of Mother, like that of those other titles of affection, suggests much more than the rule and blessing of a religious confraternity, or a spiritual superior. It leads us to think of the motherly character, the motherly heart.

1. How much all sorts of men crave for this! The young child longs for the presence and the voice of the mother; and failing these, looks about for some gentle loving woman who can do the mother's part. The poor penitents gather round some stranger, in whose life they seem to see "the law of kindness," and say to her, "Oh! we do want a mother to go to." The prodigal returns to the

old home, and seeks his father's face, and thinks there is something of a mother's tender heart—such as he needs—in him who not only ran to meet him, but stooped to kiss him. The maiden, about to trust herself for life to the man she loves, still leans upon her mother, or her motherly friend, for delicate and strengthening sympathy. The sick man, tossing on his bed of feverishness or pain, opens his child-heart to those loving ministries which recall to him one long passed away. The tired babe, and the rough lad, and the giddy girl, and the wounded soldier, and the lonely orphan, all seek their rest in some compassionate breast, which shall at least resemble a mother's.

O what a power there is even in the idea of this desire for a mother's help! What a notion it gives us of the deep needs, the widespread sorrows, of the world! How much it tends to awaken a feeling of kinship among us all!

2. Yes, and how often, and how happily, the desire, thus felt, thus recognized, is satisfied! Even those who never knew the joy and consolations of holy marriage, or the precious and delightful dower of children, are among the best helpers of the needy and the sad. Even great manly men are by no means wanting in the gentle touch, the persuasive power, the Christian patience, which are marks of the mother. Sometimes, indeed, when the mother has been called away, and all falls to the father,

it is marvellous to see how sweetness is added to strength, and the "eyes tell tales" of the man who had seemed to take only the sterner part.[1] It surprises us also sometimes to see the strong motherly instinct expressed by a young child; the fond motherly sympathy shown by one who never met "a mirror in an answering mind," or who, having lost such a blessing, never received from GOD the special "heritage and gift." But the truth is that the real virtue of motherliness is a heavenly grace, and that mere earthly experience cannot insure it to any one: so that many who are outwardly blest with children, are too selfish to love them, or to win them, or to retain their affections, and many who are childless themselves have imbibed that spirit of the SAVIOUR, which rejoices over children in youth, maturity, and age. This is often met with in the poor; it lifts the careworn out of themselves, it makes old people young, it is the one hope of the very sinful. Let us all pray for a tender spirit, and keep within us a motherly heart, or at least that gentle fatherliness which is indeed wedded to it.

3. For think what good is done in the world, what progress is wrought in the Church, by such hearts as these. They change the desolate places of the earth. They comfort the sorrowful. They draw

[1] Observe how Shakespeare makes Sebastian say, "I am yet so near the manners of my mother, that, upon the least occasion more, mine eyes will tell tales of me."

the sinful back to penitence and peace. They get the children to go along with them, even on the narrow way. Through motherly hearts, purity becomes the aim and the joy of many—and love the habit of their life—and religion a delightsome thing. The motherly heart makes refinement easy, and discipline full of blessing, and service a token of gratitude. Through this the stranger gains a home, and the wanderer a welcome, and the friendless something more than a friend, and the dying is enabled to depart in peace. Herein the great void is in part filled up for the bereaved, and a bright memory is at least renewed, and a Divine hope of infinitely better consolations, though graciously likened to the best of the old home, is granted to the sorrowful: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort thee."

What an honour for us to be allowed to be imitators of GOD in this! What a joy to be able, in His Name, to speak words of nourishment and tenderness and love, and to prove that the love which we drew in from our mother, we rejoice to give forth to all who need the kindly word, and the deed of mercy!

XVIII.

LOVE'S RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT.

"My child, we still must think, when we
That ampler life together see,
Some true result will sure appear
Of what we are together here."

A. H. CLOUGH.

A HOLY mother is one of the greatest blessings for which we can lift up our hearts in thankfulness to GOD—one of those Divine bestowals which chiefly make us answerable for the state of our hearts and the direction of our lives. Indeed, motherhood in itself, quite apart from character, links us, in the order of Providence, with that spiritual being which originally came from Heaven, and that living soul of "Adam which was the son of GOD;" motherhood in itself points us onward to those who shall come after in our line, or at least to that personal self of ours, which, derived from those before us, shall stand hereafter, amid the vast multitudes of quick and dead, before the judgment-seat.

But what precious bonds with the past, what

glorious hopes for the future, are involved in the great gift of a good Christian mother! Through such a one we not only inherit the fruits of the Fall, but learn and gain the way to Restoration. By such a one our hearts are raised to heavenly aims, and the conflict for holiness, and a desire to see GOD. To such a one we owe a lifelong debt of gratitude, and often (under GOD) the eternal salvation of our souls.

And He who, as we have seen, lifts up to Himself our nearest and holiest relationships, does not wish us to forget those dear ones who have passed away, after doing us good all the days of our life. It is entirely in accordance with His will and wish for us that the "fathers of our flesh," to whom "we gave reverence"—those mothers that bare us, and brought out all that is best in us—should be remembered in our thankful hearts, and their image and influence projected into the coming years, up to that happy reunion and recognition to which the faithful earnestly look forward. It is the deepest and truest love—love resembling (in its measure) very closely the mutual love of GOD and His children—which discovers, in a mother, at once the blessed retrospect and the happy prospect.

1. Thinking of her, our minds travel back, joyfully, thankfully, to the implanting of pure and good thoughts—a real possession for us, however much we allowed them to be overlaid or repulsed.

We found in her (if the word may be allowed) a sort of "visible Providence," a watchful guide for all the members of the household, a kindly light through all perplexities and troubles. What brightness was imparted to our early life, what love cared for us at all times, what lessons we learned from her as to duty and reverence and manners and perfect truthfulness! What an example rose before us day by day of all that was pure and honest and of good report! Surely, so far as we attended to it, this has coloured our whole life. Thus we can recal the rebukes of love, the encouragements to obedience, the calls to earnestness, the beginning of right habits, the long patience of affection, the unwearied prayers on our behalf. Much of it seems too sacred for others; the memory of that life opens many secret chambers in our own. But, besides, there is the recollection of the ordinary course, without many notable events, and yet full of interest and delight, like that described in the simple though pathetic apostrophe of Cowper to his mother's picture. How truly may it be said of such reminiscences that "the heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." Each of us has a fund of memories—trifling as they might seem if mentioned to others, but real and dear to us—connected with our mother's days. The one fact that she loved us deeply and always, and the earnest wish that we

had loved her more gratefully, give special importance to those days that are no more. And often, as many of us know full well, there is much more than this in the time to which we look back, in the character which we cherish. Often there was and is much of the "gracious and noble disposition" of George Herbert's mother, who, as her devout son said of her, "blended all that shines good and beautiful in serious womanhood." GOD be praised for these blessed saints of His, these who indeed showed themselves, in a greater or lesser sphere, "mothers in Israel." The past is surely very precious to us for their sakes, as for other great mercies of the LORD.

2. And we look onward also, rejoicing in hope of the glory of GOD, and of that bright and everlasting reunion with His saints, as with those unknown to us in the wider history of the Church, so with those whom we ourselves have loved and lost.

In that other world, indeed, as our LORD Himself, speaking that which He knows, has declared to us, "They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of GOD in Heaven." But still that love, which is eminently a love of the inner life, and not merely of the outward features, will survive all changes. Death cannot separate the soul from GOD in CHRIST JESUS our LORD; nor can it separate the spirit of the dead

from the spirit of the living here, much less keep separate from each other hereafter those who have loved one another in the LORD. It is the father's faith which speaks of the dear little child which has been taken from him, "I shall go to him." It is the mother's love which expects to see and surely to know that son and daughter of her heart, for whom she has been praying for years. It is the child's keen sense of the immortal debt it owes to parents which keeps unimpaired through life their very features and their familiar words and their inner graces, and which feels that whatever the outward change of form, the links of affection will remain unbroken, and the mutual knowledge taken up where it was dropped, only in "the bond of perfectness."

The "glorious Body" of our LORD was, and is, the same Body which His mother wept for at the Cross; and though His countenance now is as the sun shining in his strength, the disciple whom He loved on earth recognized it as that which had for years been his study and delight. And as to a still closer tie, "Every instinct of the heart rebels against supposing that Mary in Heaven will be no more to JESUS than any other holy woman, and that she will remember her motherhood as only a strange dream of the past." So with regard to ourselves, our bonds of inward union with others cannot be

1. It is true, of course, that with all of us

who rise at the last day, the forms which relapsed into dust will have gone through an entire change at the resurrection; and that all deformity and disfigurement (even that which had a sort of charm for special friends) will have passed away. But we shall all rise again with our bodies, and though incorruptible and powerful and glorious, they will be known by those who loved us. The soul will then be prominent, as here it was hidden, while visible and lovable to other souls; and the body there will be comparatively of small value, and yet will share with the all-precious soul which is shining through it, the honour which cometh from GOD and from His redeemed. And so, as we meet each other (GOD grant it), and rejoice together, without fear of tears or death or sin, "we shall ever be with the LORD."

3. But often, between the retrospect and the prospect, there comes another kind of glance, that of introspection—looking into our own heart and life; and yet another, the looking up to GOD in a humble but firm resolve to arise from the dead self to higher things. This is not, need not be, the experience of all, as they recall, in love, the past goodness of those who have loved them, and reflect on the great hope of seeing again, in the heavenly home, those whom they "have loved long since, and lost awhile." But many who fancy that all is well with them do require a stern awakening. And

it may be granted them, in the memory (aroused by some apparent trifle) of one who is gone to her rest, and whose work of prayer and care for them needs completing. How simple, yet how touching, is the story of the sailor lad whose good mother had taught him to pray and to read the Scriptures. She was dead when he came back, and he went to sea again, and forgot all Christian habits. One day, looking for his holiday clothes, he came upon his long-neglected Bible, and found in it a folded paper with a lock of grey hair, and written underneath, in his sister's hand, "This is our mother's hair; her dying prayer was that you might love GOD'S Word." And then and there, summoning up those reproachful eyes, he knelt down and prayed for pardon and for power to amend his life.[1]

The old forgotten Past starts up at times, and bids us face the Future in this living Present, while yet we may turn our faces and our hearts homeward and heavenward. In the noblest of all the stories which we owe to our great humourist, how suggestive are the heart-broken words of the man, degraded then, but afterwards rising to the grandest possible self-sacrifice, "I have heard whispers of old voices impelling me upward that I thought were silent for ever."[2]

In the wilderness of this world, when we seem

[1] See "The Children's Bread," by Rev. H. J. Wilmot-Buxton.

[2] Sydney Carton, in the "Tale of Two Cities."

cut off from all friends, and sadly realize what it may be for us to have to die alone, or to live in solitude and fear, the memories of our early years and of those who cherished us therein, will come to us with a wonderful power and pathos, and bring out what is best in us, and change our sadness into gladness, and our fear into faith.

Sometimes, when we are driven in upon ourselves, and our heart sinks at the thought of what we have lost, and we feel awfully alone, the Divine Love will take hold of us, and give us peace and hope.

Among the relics of the Franklin Expedition there is a tiny volume of "Christian Melodies," which must have, for many, a mournful interest, as its open page speaks of a mother's tender care. On this the writer looked back, to this he looked forward. May not some of those desolate but undaunted Englishmen, in that region of impenetrable ice, have made the words their own?

"Kind guardian angel of life's infant hours,
Thy love resembles His, which changes not.

. . . . . .

Far distant be the painful hour
When I shall mourn thy loss, and wander o'er
Life's desert by a mother's love uncheered."

Ours may be a very different experience. Not such as this may be our retrospect and prospect.

But whatever be our reminiscences, whatever be the thoughts which we connect with our old home, and with those on whom our life, under GOD, depended, the bidding from Him, whether in sadness or in gladness, is always that we seek His face. Even though (impossible thought to some of us!) our mother should forsake us or fail to have compassion on us, He will forget us never. He is ever saying, in words which we might all appropriate to ourselves—

> "Return, O wanderer, to thy Home,
> Thy FATHER calls for thee.'

HOME.

"Dwell with the living past, so living yet so dead;
The mother's kiss upon the sleeping brow,
The little fish caught from the brook,
The dead child-sister's gentle voice and look,
The schooldays and the father's parting hand,
The days so far removed, yet oh! so near."

LEWIS MORRIS.

XIX.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

"Such is the patriot's boast, where'er we roam,
Our first, best country ever is at home."

GOLDSMITH.

EVERY one owns this; every one feels it; every one knows it to be true. There is no question to be argued about: no other side to be heard. We have here the wisdom, the common sense, the proverbial experience of the world, certainly of the English world. But why is there no place like home? There will be so much to be said on Home, that it may be worth while to begin with a few words as to the magic of the word, the joy of its meaning.

The first answer is, that at home we are known, and known at our best. It is, of course, most true that some of our worst points also come to light there. Still, the better side of our nature, whether often seen or not, is at least known of in our home. We have been watched there from our infancy, and no disguise, no after-reserve, no later deceitfulness, can avail to conceal our true self. We are never strangers there. And there is real comfort in this.

We are in our own abode, among our own, intimately acquainted with the rest of the inmates, and the rest well acquainted with us. Oh! that means so much to those who deeply value home. It means that others, our kith and kin, discern our higher motives, make allowance for our falls and failures, mark our upward growth (just as they measure, at intervals, our very bodily stature), understand our ways and our habits, and even our looks. It means that we ourselves have others to watch and to take interest in, others to learn from and to keep touch with, others in the knowledge of whom we may gain a thorough insight into what is pure and noble and honest. Yes, to know and to be known thoroughly is one of the secret joys of home.

But, more than this, it is the abode of love, where we ourselves are loved, notwithstanding all our faults and all our shortcomings, where we can "love one another, with a pure heart, fervently." And while we feel, thankfully, that love—good, bright, unselfish love—meets us on many sides, we feel also that there is *no* place like home, because there all the members have, or may have, one common interest in each other's welfare, one bond of union both naturally and through grace, one inner sympathy, not always expressed, but always present. It is no answer to say that many a home is sadly wanting in this; for that only means that each such home is unworthy of its name. Where GOD'S

order is observed, and GOD'S light rules, the home is a sanctuary for the heart.

> "Sweet is the smile of home; the mutual look
> When hearts are of each other sure;
> Sweet all the joys that crowd the household nook,
> The haunt of all affections pure."[1]

Oh! what a beautiful thing is the memory of home-love! What a power for recalling the members to the old walls, when almost all are scattered, yes, even when only one remains in the central spot! Such love goes down to the very roots of our being; it is entwined round the parent stem; it climbs to the topmost and outmost branches; it shines in the little leaves of our recollection; it sweetens the bitter fruit of life, and enhances the delight of its sweetness. This it is which makes the poor man's home as happy as a king's—this, without which the king's home, compared with the poor man's, is a mere show. What a picture of domestic love, of domestic gladness, rises before us, as we read in Burns's poems "The Cotter's Saturday Night," and see—

> "Wi' joy unfeign'd brothers and sisters meet,
> An' each for other's weelfare kindly spiers."

How true to nature, how responsive to GOD'S own love, is the scene in the family-room which royalty likes best, where the parents are the happy slaves of the children, and Love is king over all![2]

[1] The "Christian Year."

[2] Many will remember the story of the French king (Louis XV.)

And so, home is a rest to us. It is our refuge from the world, from its unrealities, its discordant voices, its thankless toils, its awful disappointments, its unsatisfying pleasures, its gilded vices. We leave the world, even in our thought, and find ourselves at peace, led by a little child, taken up with some simple occupation, able to walk for a mile in the companionship of a brother, without speaking yet without *gêne* or uneasiness. In the home, when illness comes upon us, we have a sense of quiet amid discomfort, or when trouble arises, we find sources of consolation, or when sin has made us wretched, hope springs anew at the sight of the calm though saddened face of an earthly father, ready still with the kiss of peace. Surely, home is a restful place.

And another charm, another blessing, of the home lies in the power of association. We have links, there, with a distant past. Even childhood seems to some of us very far off;[1] and childhood is bound up with our present life, even with our oldest age, in a marvellous way—the charm of memory often seeming severed utterly in the intermediate years,

found on his hands and knees as a horse for his little boy, and saying to the ambassador who thus discovered him, "Are you a father?" "Yes, Sire," was the reply. "Then," said the king, "we will continue our game."

[1] A dear friend of the writer's, deaf and crippled, who had been much left to his own thoughts for years, once said that *centuries* seemed to have gone by since he was a child.

to reappear in the recollection of earliest youth, like a stream lost in the sands yet issuing forth at last in the great and wide sea. But our home has oftentimes bonds of union with the generations that are long, long past, stretching out beyond our infancy. Slight things, with which we are familiar—forms and faces, tastes and habits, bind us to those who came before us, as well as to those who, under GOD, gave us our being. We not only rejoice in the fresh flowers which greet us day by day, scenes and sayings which are new to us each morning—

> "But there's a tree, of many, one,
> A single field which I have looked upon,
> Both of them speak of something that is gone:
> The pansy at my feet
> Doth the same tale repeat.
> Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
> Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

Yes, and through those before us, those who are our own, those who perhaps started the home, or inherited it, come the higher associations with the Eternal World, and with Him who is the Author of all life, the FATHER and King of every soul of man. Earth and Heaven are really connected together, though man is too often satisfied with the lower home, and is soon made to

> "Forget the glories he hath known,
> And that imperial Palace whence he came."

XX.

THE TRUE HOUSE-BAND.

"Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
And craves no other tribute at thy hands
But love, fair looks, and true obedience."

SHAKESPEARE.

IT has been well said, that "man enters a new world of joy, and sympathy, and human interest, through the porch of love. He enters a new world in his home—the home of his own making—altogether different from the home of his boyhood."[1]

But the home will be what he makes it. We all know, of course, the vast influence of the mother there, how much depends on her in the teaching of prayer, in the first start of education, in the germ and enlargement of love, in times of sickness and bereavement, in all the thousand matters which concern the family. But, after all, "the head of the woman is the man," and the husband must be

[1] Smiles, on "Character."

the central support of the wife, the main guide of the children, the life of the home. His very name implies this. He is "the house-band."

> "The name of the husband what is it to say?
> Of wife and of household the band and the stay." [1]

Of the home he is to be the chief supporter: in him (type of CHRIST the Head of the Church) all the members are to be connected together, fused into one. Let all of us who value home recollect this and act upon it. The stately homes, and the merry homes, and the cottage homes, all depend upon this bond—or (where this is gone) upon links which can be traced back to it. How earnestly is it to be wished, that each possessor of this beautiful and honoured title would bear its meaning in mind, and let others see that he does so!

1. The master of the family is to have authority. This is not for his own dignity, for his own selfish advancement, but for the good of all the rest. He has authority for their sake. The principle of authority is one of the most important that we have in social or civil life, as well as in the Church. It is given us with a view to order, and discipline, and right submission, and a regular division of work, the one in authority having his own share of work, having in his turn to submit himself to others, and to show that he can practise discipline, and that he

[1] See Trench on "The use of words."

has an orderly mind. This keeps him from being an autocrat,[1] and draws him to act considerately though firmly towards others, doing his personal duty first and making the rest do theirs, just as the centurion, who has soldiers under him, is under authority himself. On the one hand, he must not lord it over others, whom, however princely or powerful, he is bound to serve:[2] on the other hand, he should not let himself be driven hither and thither by those who ought to obey him, and whom at times he yet expects to obey him, lest he become like King Lear, that

> "Poor old man,
> That still would manage those authorities
> That he hath given away."

We must not part with authority intrusted to us or inherited by us, for it is not ours to part with. Nor can we expect others to uphold our authority when we do not uphold it ourselves.

In these days, much is said, and most regretfully, and very truly, about the lack of submission to authority. It all begins in the home; and if only the father of each family would maintain his own proper rule, and keep his children and household in

[1] When St. Paul says that the woman is not "to have authority over" the man, he uses a word meaning to be an autocrat—one who with his own hand, and for his own hand, does this or that, according to his own will. 1 Tim. ii. 12.

[2] The motto of our Prince of Wales is "Ich dien."

subjection because he loves and cares for them, the larger circle would follow the lesser, and the nation, which never will be slaves, would be free for the hearty service of GOD and man.

2. But again, the husband, the head and band of the house, must rule by love. However much occupied in worldly affairs, however engrossed in work for his family, he cannot expect to prosper either way, unless, when at home, he makes affection the governing principle. It has been truly said, that "his whole mind may be in his business, but if he would be happy, his whole heart must be in his home."[1] There is indeed a way of seeking to be happy, which is only a subtle form of selfishness, when we wish all to love us, and make ourselves the centre which all are to seek. But where the object is not our own happiness, but the comfort and pleasure and progress of the rest, the result is happiness to ourselves. The man who really loves his home will be full of love; and it will spread from him like waves of sound from a purely vibrating string. "How much," says Sir John Lubbock, "would that charity which hopeth all things and endureth all things effect to smooth away the sorrows of life, and add to the happiness of home! Home, indeed, may be a sure haven of repose from the storms and perils of the world. But, to secure this, we must not be content to pave it with good

[1] Smiles on "Character."

intentions, but must make it bright and cheerful." And this will bring its own reward in days of pain or adversity and in the common round of difficult work. "If our life be one of toil or of suffering, if the world outside be cold or dreary, what a pleasure to return to the sunshine of happy faces, and the warmth of hearts we love!"

3. And as with love, so with all other graces of the godly and manly heart. In the home his character must display itself—not in pride, but because he is most natural there—on both sides. If it is there that his faults and failings are most easily discerned, and find fullest scope, there too will the good that is in him come to light. His truthfulness, his honesty, his sympathy, his readiness to sacrifice himself, his courtesy, will there be chiefly exercised! And let us note the reason. It is because the exercise of such graces is more difficult in a person's own family than in the outer world; and the more difficult the task, the more manfully will the genuine man grapple with it. He will be gracious in the lesser and more trying sphere, and then he will go out into the larger and more complicated one, equipped and ready with the charity which began at home.

4. And once more, he will find that his life and teaching, his character and influence, are telling upon those who dwell with him. A sense of duty led him along that path; but the doing of a duty

gives a man great power among those with whom he lives. Sir Thomas More's home was a school of the Christian Religion. He won all hearts to obedience by his gentleness. It has been beautifully though simply said of him, that he was "a man clothed in household goodness," and his home was pervaded by an atmosphere of love and duty. So should it be, according to our measure, with each one of us fathers now. If each of us would keep an open, patient, cheerful heart—a heart at leisure from itself—a heart resolved to rule in gentleness and wisdom—we should have the great joy of seeing spiritual growth in our home, alacrity in all sorts of service, and thoroughness in every kind of work. The house could not be divided against itself, for the bright strong band of the house would hold it all together.

XXI.

CHARACTER AND TRAINING.

"Think truly, and thy thoughts
Shall the world's famine feed;
Speak truly, and each word of thine
Shall be a fruitful seed;
Live truly, and thy life shall be
A great and noble deed."

In the home character unfolds itself: the earliest and most important sphere of training is the home. Home makes the man, as Smiles has pointed out. It is the best of schools. The mind and character are formed at home. There, example tells upon us; and imitation, even from earliest infancy, follows example and creates habit. There, also—a point less observed,—the mind and character are tested and proved.

By character is meant the stamp of the heart, much more than the stamp of the intellect—it means the spirit we are of, quite apart from the talents of our mind. To train up a child is to lead him, in his whole nature, along the path of duty, faith, and love. Even the mental powers are to be

exercised on the principle that the reason *owes* itself to GOD and man, in harmony with faith and love. All the faculties need gradual unfolding: body, soul, and spirit must be trained from the very first. For this, many influences are needed, and in the home many are at hand.

1. How much the mother has to do with that development—what an invaluable part she plays in that discipline and progress—has already been pointed out. None can dictate to a mother what her course should be with her own children. One of the very best books on "Home Education"[1] quotes a most true and noteworthy remark of Frederic Maurice on the subject: "The woman receives from the SPIRIT of GOD Himself the intuitions into the child's character, the capacity of appreciating its strength and its weakness, the faculty of calling forth the one and sustaining the other, in which lies the mystery of education, apart from which all its rules and measures are utterly vain and ineffectual."

But though this is indeed so, all will agree that whatever the method thus secretly and Divinely suggested to the mother, it should be faithfully and completely carried out. And if a wise love be the guiding principle, the object and the way will be steadily kept in view, and whatever hindrances rise up, either from the child himself, or from other

[1] By Charlotte M. Mason (Kegan Paul, Trench, and Co.).

dwellers in the house, or from those quite outside, the training of the character will always go forward, till at last the sons and daughters whom she has brought up, arise and bless her for her goodness, and recall throughout life the blessings which came to them at home through her.

2. And the father's part is equally plain. It may, of course, be said (and justly) that the cares and business of daily life press too heavily and continually upon him to allow of his devoting himself much, or regularly, to the spiritual and mental development of his children. But still, every truly Christian father will take pains, according to his opportunities, in all that concerns their moral and religious training. Some of his leisure is for them; some of his special talents are improved in their behalf; some of his work lies in the study and furtherance of their character. If "the child is father of the man," some manly qualities should be implanted in him by his own father.

Truthfulness, thoroughness, cheerfulness, gentleness, these the very busiest man can impart to his offspring, partly by actual teaching, but chiefly by the pattern of his personal life. The memory of a home where these are learnt, will survive many failures and many falls, and restore him who cherishes it to a hope of better things in himself. Nay more, is not one who knows what it is to be

a penitent, often helpful afterwards to the children whom GOD mercifully gives him?

"How many a father have I seen,
A sober man among his boys,
Whose youth was full of foolish noise,
Who wears his manhood hale and green!"

3. What influence, too, may flow from the other members of the household—the brothers and sisters, the faithful servants of the family, the humble, gentle, loyal friends and lovers of our childhood! Wordsworth's sister Dorothy was the blessing of his boyish days, the one who unlocked the doors of poetry for his after-life.

"She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
And humble cares, and delicate fears,
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears,
And love and thought and joy."

How deeply did the great Lord Shaftesbury own himself indebted to the old nurse who solaced him as a child, and supplied for his loneliness the tender grace and training which were withheld from him by his own parents! How strongly many of us feel, during our whole course, the power for good granted us in a brother's affection, a brother's counsel, a brother's example!

4. And there is one reminiscence more, which, to those who have it, is very precious—the recollection of the self-discipline which we gained at home, of the power granted us there of

beginning to train our own will. There is no cause for boasting in this. Who, that realizes his present shortcomings, his frequent loss of mastery over himself, could fancy that he had anything to glory of in that early start in the Christian race? Yet, surely, many may be very thankful for the bias which was given them, in the old home, towards purity and temperance and religious habits, and for some real victories in the morning hours of life's little day. He who has watched us, alike in the home and in the world, knows what we owe to the care and teaching of others, and what, by His grace, we have gained for ourselves.

"We live by admiration, hope, and love." Our wonder at some strong and beautiful character constraining us to imitation; our earnest looking forward in the days of youth to the perfecting of grace begun; our longing reverent affection for the FATHER of mercies, and the SAVIOUR of our souls; these are the deep sources of our spiritual life—which begin with its conscious beginning, and are drawn upon through all our progress heavenward. These are some of the best elements in our training, some of the rich blessings of our happy homes.

XXII.

THE DIVINE IDEAL OF A CHRISTIAN HOME.

"Where Thou art most beloved is room for all;
The heart grows wide that holdeth Thee;
A heaven where none doth press upon the other."

ST. PAUL gives us a very striking portrait of a family.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the LORD. . . .

"Husbands, love your wives, even as CHRIST also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. . . .

"Children, obey your parents in the LORD. . . .

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD.

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto CHRIST. . . .

"And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your MASTER also is in Heaven."

This whole passage of Holy Scripture shows us how eminently practical CHRIST'S religion is; how it concerns and is meant to influence all the different relationships of life; how simple, yet how

far-reaching into character, its precepts are; and how thoroughly and regularly its spirit, as well as its precepts, tend to make this world in which we live a good and happy world, by constant reference to Him who died for us, and who liveth in us.

Here is, indeed, a lesson for us in our homes. Let us study it as Christians, all of us, men, women, and children, one with another.

First, we note that the relationships here dwelt upon are home-relationships; that the duties enforced are home-duties; that the life to be sanctified and blest is just our home-life. It is such a mistake to think that we can be true citizens before we are true members of a family; to imagine that our mission is to do good to others, when we are not serving our own; to have dreams of a noble life at college or in business, while we are spending life meanly or idly in the schoolroom; to act as if we could help society to be good before we have exerted ourselves, and made sacrifices, in order to gladden and improve our home. All real work, all deep love, all sincere religion, begins at home. It is not, of course, to be denied that many a man has found his final sphere of duty, his larger scope for a life of usefulness, among strangers and in a distant land, and that there his character, braced by the changes and chances which befall him, has gained depth and strength. But as, in that far-off place, he thinks with ever-growing affection of

"the old folks at home," where he is not forgotten for a day, but, indeed, "distance makes the heart grow fonder"—so is the root of that attachment deep down in the early years; and in proportion to its depth at the beginning is the reality and blessing of its leaf and fruit in the aftertime. And so, assuredly, if we would wish to be cherished in the hearts of others when separated by "the great and wide sea," or by the rolling waves of time's ceaseless course, we must do our best, while we *are* young and while we *are* at home, to live for those whom we love, labouring among them as those who put self last; and who are always brighter for that sacrifice. Apart from this, how can we expect "good success"? "If," says a practical English writer, "a person's home is an ill-regulated one, where no links of affection extend throughout the family, whose former domestics (and he has had more of them than he can well remember) look back upon their sojourn with him as one unblest by kind words or deeds, that man has not been successful."[1] Yes, let us not be fanciful, sentimental Christians; let our religion be real and true, proved and tested daily by happy helpful love in our own home and among our own kith and kin, and those who serve us and to whom we ourselves may be servants for JESUS' sake.

But, again, the Apostle reminds us that it is the

[1] Sir A. Helps.

ordinary bonds of human life which need continual strengthening. The LORD desires to make us better husbands and wives, better and more dutiful sons and daughters, kinder and more considerate parents. He would have the service which we render to one another a better, and more loyal, and more conscientious service, and the authority and lordship which we exercise over others exerted in a better way, a more loving brotherly way. In our country, by GOD'S blessing, the family life is, on the whole, maintained at a high level and with much consequent happiness. This is recognized by thoughtful foreigners. Padre Agostino, for instance, the great Italian preacher, bears witness to it. "In the present day," he says, "among the nations of modern Europe, the family tie is nowhere more respected than in England: hence the unity of the nation, which is evident to all. In England the family-life is held so sacred that the Englishman would fain carry his home with him wherever he goes." And the reason why the typical homes of England prosper and make prosperous is that the better homes, at all events, aim at carrying out the teaching of GOD'S Word in the daily details of domestic life. Without this, a home would present an unhappy picture, whether viewed from within or from without. As the eloquent Padre says, "Religion is the indispensable foundation of family life." And, after all, the exercise of religion in

family life is but the grateful realization of the great fact that all our relationships are Divinely ordered for us, Divinely given to us. It was GOD who said, "It is not good that man should be alone," and He found him a help meet for him, and always "a prudent wife is from the LORD." Two souls united in the LORD "for mutual society, help, and comfort"—this is GOD'S beautiful work, GOD'S gracious bestowal. And the dower of blessed children is the same: they are "an heritage and gift that cometh of the LORD." And the way in which we are made dependent on each other—some for support, others for service, all for sympathy—is shown to be His appointment by the extraordinary circumstance that even His everlasting SON came among us as "He that serveth." He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," and yet to claim the homage and the love, the submission and the obedience due to the Master and the LORD.

It is the appreciation, be it repeated, of this fact —this grant to us from Almighty GOD of our dear human relationships, and His hallowing of them all —which makes us try, for very gratitude sake, to make the family-life a religious life, to be, as St. Paul teaches us we ought to be, good husbands and good wives, good children and good fathers and mothers, good masters and good servants. "Happy are the people that are in such a case;

yea, blessed are the people," blessed the individual families, who thus "have the LORD for their GOD."

But let us look a little more closely at our home-lesson. There is such a heavenly principle running through it all. Every part of it points to our LORD. It is because of Him that the wife is to submit herself unto her husband. Her husband, or, as the Bible bids her call him, "her lord," is a figure to her of the LORD of glory, "CHRIST the Head of the Church." It is in imitation of His love, His awful self-sacrificing love, that the husband is to love his wife, cherishing her, denying himself for her, regarding her as himself, "even as the LORD the Church." It is in the LORD that children are to obey their parents. The children are not merely the flesh and blood of their parents; they are sprung from a spiritual union in the LORD Himself, which man cannot really put asunder. It is in the nurture and admonition of the LORD that fathers are to bring up these children of theirs. If the servants of the house are exhorted to singleness of heart in obeying their masters according to the flesh, it is because they are really serving, in *their* persons, the LORD CHRIST—serving them and serving Him, not like the bond-slaves of St. Paul's day (though even these were exhorted to show goodwill and love in their service), but with the affection and loyalty of the free. And if the Scriptural bidding to masters

is, to be forbearing, full of gentleness and goodwill towards those who, for a few short years, are serving them, the ground for this is the dominion of that most kind and long-suffering LORD, who is over us all for ever.

Thus CHRIST, in His headship over the Church, instructs the members of the Church how all their social duties, all their home ties, may be consecrated by reference to Him; and the Church, in her relation to CHRIST, learns that, instead of despising any of these earthly links and connections, and seeking some fresh bond of merely spiritual union—the Church learns that in the rendering of those ordinary dues, in the sanctifying of these family affections, is found that true, faithful service of GOD and man, which is of the very essence of religion.

Only we must ever bear in mind that these relationships, beautiful and blessed as they are, belong, in one sense, only to the time which is passing away. In the Heaven which we hope and pray for, "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage." In Heaven we shall all equally be servants, all equally free with the glorious liberty of the children of GOD. In Heaven the child's attitude of obedience, the father's position of authority, will have blended into the spirit and the habit of mutual love. How earnestly should we strive, while in the body, while still knit up

with others in our happy homes, to promote (whatever be our relationships) each other's welfare! How constantly should we be proving our own selves, whether, amid present joys and examples not always of the highest, we are indeed maintaining a life unspotted by the world, and a heart truly devoted to GOD! The calls of the LORD to think and act aright, as husbands and wives, as parents and children, as masters and dependents, are calls to remember our daily duties, to enjoy aright the blessings which He gives us, but always to remember also that this is not our rest, and that we must be ready and glad to serve Him here in preparation for serving Him hereafter. All those we love, all those who love us, all who are bound up with us in the ties of duty, kindred, or affection, are types of Him who is "altogether lovely," who never leaves us or forsakes us. All those thus bound up with us can be loved for ever, if we love them in the LORD: and in living, as Christian souls, for others, we shall have a witness in ourselves that we do truly love *Him* best.

"I have lived," says one, "in the life of others till I have scarcely put before myself in words, 'Where is the ultimate home of my heart?'

"There is a Presence which stands by me when I wake, and lives with me through the day, and watches close beside me when I lie down at night, and is safety and brightness when I open my eyes

in the midnight darkness; and I know that none can separate me from it. In the realization of that Presence, my longing, eager heart has found its home for time and for eternity."

XXIII.

LESSONS IN UNSELFISHNESS.

"Oh! I could go through all life's troubles singing,
Turning earth's night to day,
If self were not so fast around me clinging
To all I do or say."

FABER.

GOD gives us a home that we may think of others, not merely of our own things. We are placed in a family circle, and there is One in the midst of us, who is the Centre, and in whom we may love and serve all the rest.

Home, as we have seen, is the earliest school for the training of character. Selfishness is the greatest hindrance to that training, the absolute ruin of the character. And everything in the home is meant and calculated to keep in check and gradually conquer that habit and its dangerous tendencies.

This Divine purpose is often overlooked, and children first, and men afterwards, act and speak as if everything were for them, as if every one should give way to them. Even earnest-minded Christians

are sometimes arrested, late in life, by that heart-searching voice which tells them of the peril of self, and of the extent to which they have allowed self to come in and mar their best service. And then, as they look at themselves, not morbidly but with a view to amendment, they see that the roots of this evil are traceable to childhood; they were weeds in the nursery garden, and ought to have been pulled up at home, in a soil full of hope and opportunity for a very different sort of growth—the habit of unselfishness.

Whether we are in the enjoyment of home, or in the recollection of it, or in the expectation of it, we shall do well to observe this—to study the lessons in unselfishness which are given in the home by that Almighty FATHER, of whom every family of ours is named, and from whom every member of every family was at least intended to learn those lessons.

What might a child see, as he looks around him in the house? What may most men remember, as they look back on those days of childhood? Would this be too ideal a picture?

Father and mother giving up time, and money, and pleasure, for the sake of one child or of several children—living, indeed, again in the life of their children, and finding delight in their welfare, but still, as we say, "taking pains" for them, enduring much on their account, practising self-denial that

they may be maintained and educated and launched in their several professions. Both really do this, and the father often with quite as much secret self-sacrifice as the mother. But the mother's disregard of her own comfort and enjoyment is specially evident even to the careless son or daughter, so much so that that disregard of self in regarding them, not seldom becomes a wonderful power in altering their after-course. Oh, that we thought of it enough while that beautiful and persuasive life is before our eyes, for indeed it would go far towards keeping us free from the mere pleasing of self.

Again, the other lives around us in our home—our brothers and sisters, or (if so be) our one solitary companion near and dear to us. How much we might be taught, as well by their consideration for us, their readiness to give up to us, as also by the events in their lives which appeal to us for sympathy or congratulation—their sicknesses and infirmities, their joys and hopes! We have the blessing of being able to forget, the duty of trying to forget, our own cares, and delights, and interests, and disappointments, and expectations, in those of others.

And the servants, dependent on our parents for support, are dependent on us for patience, yes, and for sympathy too. They have their history, their griefs and gladnesses, their advance or retrogression on the path, their falls and their repentances.

What a deep interest their inner life would be to us if we knew it! What an aid in getting away from self-regard we should find in caring for them, in trying to help them on!

And the visitors, though we ask them to take us as they find us, yet need our thoughtful attention if we would let them feel at home. Something of ours, some little matter, some great thing, must be surrendered, if their stay with us is to be happy indeed. And how willing they themselves are to set self aside, and to make themselves one with the youngest child in games, and amusements, and occupations!

And, once more, even the clouds which come over the family landscape are meant surely to raise us from our dead selves to higher things, to merge our personal griefs in those of the others, to make us see the needs of others as much heavier than our own.

All these things surely should help us to put away the snares of selfishness. They might remind us that "no man liveth for himself"; that each of us should seek not his own but every one another's well-being; that though we are many members, we are but one body; that we must suffer with the one who is in trouble, and rejoice with the one who is honoured, and do our best to esteem others better than ourselves, and to put self last.

Yet every one of these causes of good may prove

hurtful to us, if regarded perversely. The things which should have been for our wealth may be to us an occasion of falling.

Our parents' self-sacrificing kindness may make us fancy ourselves the most important people in the house—those to whom every one else is to bow.

The notice bestowed upon others, the advancement of our brothers and sisters, even their afflictions and their faults, may bring out in us deadly jealousy, the unworthy feelings of self-righteous sons.

The service rendered us by the members of the household may encourage us to domineer over them, or the fact of our being brotherless or sisterless may seem to us to excuse the indulgence of our wills, the absence of all self-control.

The visits of friends may be actually resented by us, as thwarting or delaying some pleasure which we wanted for ourselves, or as putting others in our place.

And, once more, the tribulations which should have bound us all more closely to each other, and lifted each of us nearer to GOD, stripped of our false self-love, may, unhappily, have the effect of driving us into a cold and heartless isolation, and of making us imagine that no one is so miserable as ourselves.

But the purpose of the LORD is against all this. He grants happiness to our lives, in order to make

us share our joy with others; and sets the cross in our familiar path, that so, before we enter into the world, we may gain the habit of being crucified with Him; and shows us every day the blessing of following Him, who pleased not Himself.

XXIV.

THE HOUSE OF MIRTH.

"A glance of heaven to see,
To none on earth is given;
And yet a happy family
Is but an earlier heaven."

BOWRING.

THE Preacher tells us that it is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; and that, whereas the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

But it is possible to be merry and wise. What is condemned is the perpetual going about after pleasure—the eagerness to be in among the children of the world, as they shut out the solemn visions of GOD and the stern realities of His kingdom. Not all mirth is blameworthy, else what could *they* do whose religion is a very cheerful thing? There is a mirth, the end of which is *not* heaviness; and the best example of this may be found in a happy home.

Our LORD Himself has given us one of the most

beautiful and convincing illustrations of this, in the "music and dancing" which celebrated the prodigal's return to his father's house. And certainly if, as we all feel, both in the earthly story and in the heavenly meaning, such rejoicing is shown by the SAVIOUR of our poor human nature to be right, we cannot doubt that a Christian home may be a truly merry one, and that, in such a home, there is not only "a time to mourn," but also "a time to dance." The memory of our happy homes is fraught with some very serious recollections, but there are some entirely bright lights across the picture; and as we study them, they strike us not as fancies thrown in as an after-thought, but as painted in body colour, and true to the life.

Let us think gratefully about those bright days, that happy tone which sounds through the sadder times, and links them all together in one hymn of praise.

First, is the power of music—that heavenly bestowal to which we owe such unspeakable and pathetic consolation, such spirit-stirring calls, such harmony with hearts often unlike our own in other respects, such natural channels for poetic words, ay, and songs which require no words, melodies which go straight to the heart,—"a thousand streams" taking "their mazy progress" to refresh and fertilize the dry land of our troubled anxious souls. Music is indeed itself a holy mirth, debased at times by

grovelling minds, but always reasserting its Divine birth, its better associations. "Music," as Luther says, "is the art of the prophets; it is the only art (besides theology) which can calm the agitations of the soul, and put the devils to flight." And so, though in one aspect solemn and holy, in another it is suggestive of the best sort of merriment, the joy for the victories of GOD. And, from the point of view from which we are regarding it, what an attractive force there is in music—attractive in the sense of drawing us to our home! It wins us to love our home, to delight in the inmates of our home, to rejoice that in our home we have a shelter from the sins and sorrows and temptations of the world, and a shelter perfectly delightful. How sweet and precious are the old songs of home; how pleasant even the imperfect use of the instruments of music there; how tunefully blended the voices of the sisters and the brothers, the merry chorus, or the beautiful chorale! Even when those who shared this Divine gift with us in youth and in maturity—those who entered as we did ourselves into its light and shade, its playfulness and its grandeur—have passed away, we must try still to be cheerful-minded, to sing the songs they loved to hear, and to find in the dear old music new links with them in the better world.[1]

[1] There is a lovely canto in Tennyson's "In Memoriam," on keeping still the birthday of the departed friend, "with festal cheer with books and music."

And while the circle of the home is still unbroken, let those of us to whom music is part of our higher life, so use it as to win others to its excellence, and specially to make our own happy and restful with us.

Then, too, there is the merry dance which comes so naturally to children, and which, when practised in measure, not only brings them gladness but expresses it. Home is the place where such good mirth may best be kept up; within "the safe and sacred walls of home," the young in age and the young in heart need not be afraid, in such an amusement, either of the world which spoils so much, or of the devil who is for spoiling everything. In false society the daughter of Herodias may bring destruction to others by her dancing; but prayer is not hindered, nor reverence cast away, nor modesty startled, though King David dances before the LORD with all his might. The Christian's home is meant to be, with all its watchfulness and all its work, joyous and free; how different from that house of the worldly, in which, after nights of pleasure, and days of luxury, the shadow of the coming judgment falls, and "all the merry-hearted do sigh!"

And is it not so with all the right and bright amusements, which help to make home what it is? To join the children's games, to entertain them as being ourselves but elder children, to act our little

parts among each other, to help others to that hearty laugh which clears away the cobwebs, and tells of good fellowship even in little things, is surely quite in harmony with the highest view of our life, and with the spirit which never forgets the Sacred Presence, wherein, assuredly, "there is no darkness at all." The revelation of the New Jerusalem does not jar upon our minds because it tells us of the "boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."[1] These sports of theirs, in which we join, may not only be harmless to them, but helpful, as reminding them that bodily exercise does profit a little, and that religion is not a gloomy thing, nor Heaven an earthly sabbath.

Such things as these relieve our lives from gloom, divert our minds awhile from care and doubt, encourage us to rejoice in the LORD, and to strive to make others happy. How sweet and glad the home, which supplies us with these, continuing thereby our love for those who dwell there, and for the rooms and very echoes of the house; and yet never dragging us down to a mere life of present amusement, because we know and are persuaded that only in His Presence is the fulness of joy, and at His right hand pleasure for evermore.

[1] Zech. viii. 5.

XXV.

THE SANCTUARY FOR SICKNESS AND HEALING.

"A holy home, a refuge bower,
For saints in evil hour."

KEBLE.

"If aught can soften grief
'Tis home's sweet influence."

BOWRING.

IT was not the ordinary feeling of men which led good Archbishop Leighton to wish that his last sickness and death might take place at an inn—a singular wish, singularly fulfilled.

Our home is our true hospice; and though always in this world we are indeed strangers and pilgrims, men on a journey to that better land where our rest shall be for ever, in the services of Heaven—yet GOD has so ordered the surroundings and assistances of our mortal life, that we may have at least some foretaste of that rest, some refreshment by the way, some tender and even angelic ministrations, in our dear human homes.

And so, when we are sick and low, we know, by

a sort of instinct, that there is no place like home for us.

1. There, all our earlier history, the weaknesses and troubles of our childhood, are well known. There are many links of memory and association between us and the familiar hearts which watch us in our illness and weariness. It is a great help to be understood at such times—to be understood, not only in our speech, but in our silence—to be under the eye of those who can enter into the very changes of expression in our face, and who can gather up in a word of ours some allusion to the scenes and cares and griefs of long ago. True deep sympathy depends very much on this loving instinct, this instantaneous recollection of days and hours spent together, this old store of mutual affection and interests. We feel we need not always be explaining. One of our own innermost circle is near us, and even when we cannot bring ourselves to speak to him or to tell him what ails us, he takes the pressure of a hand, and shows that he is acquainted with our bitterness, and that we are to him just what we always were, and that he is "a brother born for" our "adversity." Those who are intimate with me—those who have been near to me, always in heart if not always in presence—can make all possible allowance for me, when my faith is low, and the nerves feeble, and impatience apparently dominant. They know how real the pain is, and

how trying the spiritual conflict, and what is the attitude of the inner self, and what the strong hope of the soul. Oh! in our home, in sickness as in health, there is much peace in the thought that we are of the number of those—a large or a little company—who are knit together in love.

2. There, again, we have such kind tending. It is indeed that, the tending of our kith and kin. A mother's voice, the light hand of a sister, the old nurse's endearing ways—how precious, how restoring, are these! Sons of consolation begin this training, as they begin their course of love, at home. Viewed thus, the exquisite picture of S. Barnabas strikes us as a family-portrait, though it is realized afterwards and more fully in a larger society—

> "The world's a room of sickness, where each heart
> Knows its own anguish and unrest;
> The truest wisdom there, and noblest art,
> Is his, who skills of comfort best;
> Whom by the softest step and gentlest tone
> Enfeebled spirits own,
> And love to raise the languid eye,
> When, like an angel's wing, they feel him fleeting by!"[1]

O that we might each of us keep the home full of sunshine and glee, of hearty affection and unselfish considerateness. Then would our own, in after years, not only crave, in their times of ad-

[1] Christian Year (S. Barnabas' Day).

versity and suffering, for home-care, but would be able to obtain it, and under it to revive, both in body and soul.

3. And this last word reminds us that it is the religion of the home—supposing the home to be what GOD intended, a religious place—which is the true secret of tenderness and gentleness, the magnetic attraction which brings us again to desire those tender gentle ways, when days which might otherwise seem "evil" are upon us. If "holiness becometh GOD'S House for ever," how abiding should be the mark of holiness on the homes of His children! How delightful, in that case, will be the memory and the influence of that early life! How long afterwards, when sickness or trial comes, will the old home be wished for, and revisited, because of the good thoughts gained there, and the high teaching and holy living there kept before us. The anchor went down to the rock in the early morning, and though we have drifted hither and thither in the course of life's little day, when the storms arise, that anchor holds, and we find ourselves safe in our moorings. How happy to get back, in stress of weather, and to realize that the same spirit rules the home, the same faith lives in the household! Mother still says the LORD'S Prayer with us; there is the old love in our sister's face; the "strange oaths" of the alien world do not trouble us here; CHRIST has left His benedic-

tion on this house, and the Son of peace is here as much as ever. Surely it is more blessed to be weak and sickly here, than to be robust and unbelieving among people who do not care for us in the LORD.

4. But lighter recollections mingle with those that are graver. And perhaps we may reflect, in making home our refuge, that it was our "house of mirth," in the right sense of the term—a house where our laughter did *not* end in heaviness, and in which the echoes of our childhood's merriment seem to linger still. And the faces which look upon us are cheerful faces, and the eyes have a twinkle in them, and the voice is not pitched in a minor key. And so life, even for our sick bed, is bright as well as real and earnest; and if we are to be called away, we may think with comfort that here at least will be a house of Christian mourning, a place which shall keep for us a glad memorial of love, and not merely an inheritance of tears.

5. Or if, by GOD'S mercy, we may yet recover from our sickness, convalescence itself, we feel, will be happier among the loving eyes and hearts which rejoice in our daily progress towards renewal of health. Those who have prayed for us so long, and cared for us so thoroughly, will know best how to praise GOD with us, and how to shield us from harm and (by His blessing) from relapse.

And as we go forth again to our work and to our

labour, with fresh vigour and interest, we shall carry the home-spirit with us; the charity which is to reach forth to those beyond, in ever-widening circles; the patience which was shown so abundantly to us, and which has been to our hearts one of the chief lessons of our sickness; and the faith, whereby, not from our earthly home, but from our heavenly, we were taught to see that "all things work together for good to them that love GOD."

XXVI.

MUTUAL CONFIDENCE.

"For at our side we feel
Our father's smile, our mother's glance;
Say, can this earth a loving trance
Of deeper bliss reveal?"

KEBLE.

IN the Church of CHRIST "love is the bond of perfectness," the symbol and the earnest of Christian completion. And in each true home—which is a sort of miniature and microcosm of the great Church—the members and inmates are linked together by those ties of spiritual affection, which draw each to trust the rest as bound up with one another in one body, and as lacking nothing, except the opportunity, daily and gradually given, to extend to those outside, the circle of holy helpful love.

The mutual confidence, herein implied, is at the very root of the happiness of home. Without it, there would be no such thing as the *idea* of home—no vital principle to hold all together; no rays from a central faith. With it, though the members

be scattered over the world, and cannot see each other's faces for years and years, they live for and with and in each other. It is as in the mutual attraction of all the bodies in our vast solar system. Millions of miles apart, they still move on the same plane, and it is as if their voices were heard among them, proclaiming not only the Creator's glory, but peace and order, attraction and impulse, one with another.

But how much more glorious and beautiful is the union of souls in a Christian family—the perfect sympathy, in life and knowledge and interests, in hopes and fears, in joys and sorrows, of those whom GOD has made of one mind in an house!

> "Sweet is the smile of home; the mutual look
> When hearts are of each other sure."

Often it needs no words, this habit of home-trustfulness. As in the verse just quoted, the expression of the face is quite enough, the eloquence of the kindling eye, of the silent lip, the hearty yet tender grasp of the hand.

Let us be practical, and see how this helpful happy spirit may be maintained. How is it marred? for alas! the marring of it is most common, most melancholy. Have we not often marred it ourselves? And do we not feel that the love and joy and peace of home are worth any sacrifice we can make, any trouble we can take, to ward off these dangers?

Chief among these is selfishness. This is ever spoiling human happiness, hindering Divine grace. Here is the canker of the common peace, the dulling of that joy which radiates towards others, the destruction of the love which trusts, while seeking not its own. Let us contend with this in our children; its growth is early, and very quick, and of deadly power. If we let it alone, it will rob us of all our best intercourse with our sons and daughters. Let us watch against it in ourselves. A false self-love will prevent others, even our dearest, from trusting us, and will make us suspicious towards them, and raise a crust over our hearts and theirs. We must accustom ourselves to look on the things of others, and those who are nearest to us will learn to trust us completely, to love us always.

Another hindrance, often connected with the first, is shyness. Shyness is a very near relation of pride. Sometimes indeed it is constitutional, and becomes a sort of disease. We who feel it in others, must be very tender with it, if we would win them, as we surely wish to do, to open-hearted faith in us.

"Blame not the eye that from thee turns,
The cheek that in a moment burns
With tingling fire so bright,
Fearing thine eager sight—
The lowly-drooping brow, the stammering tongue,
The giddy wavering thought, scarce knowing right and wrong."[1]

[1] "Lyra Innocentium."

But, in ourselves, let us be on our guard against this natural shyness, which, like every other infirmity of nature, will yield to grace. In its beginnings it may be wrestled with, and successfully, if we try to conquer self, and to put ourselves in the place of others. For the sake of those we live with, those who love us, we can train our eyes to regard their faces steadily and kindly, till their eyes speak again to us, and tell us that we need never be afraid. For them we can train our hearts always to speak the truth in love, always to be ready for the reproof of love, for the kindness of sympathy, for the sharing of interests. Little by little, almost before we know, we shall have gained the habit of rejoicing with those who rejoice, of weeping with them that weep, first in the smaller circle, and then in the larger.

But there is a much worse fault than this—a fault which cannot be described as a failing, and which will always interfere with the peace and confidence of the home—personal deceitfulness. The spirit of the world, the temper of the serpent, is ever trying to intrude into the little sanctuary which should be full only of loving hearts. And the evil spreads from one to another, as poison always has a tendency to do, till the higher interests and the working for the common good get driven away, and affection loses its reality, and sympathy its self-sacrifice, and misunderstanding and suspicion take the place of the love which believes without seeing, and which

judges not according to the appearance. How terrible is this spoiling of the intercourse of hearts! Let every one who values home as a great possession with which no stranger can intermeddle, beware of himself most of all. It is a noble thing to keep an open, loving heart—a heart which is always frank and true, with "godly sincerity." This is the very elixir of life for those who dwell with us.

But, after all, the real reason why this peculiar charm of the home is often prevented from working is that we are so apt to forget that simple rule, "charity begins at home." It must be planted before it is transplanted. It must strike its roots in native soil, and then it can blossom and bear fruit for those outside. How many ignore this law of the spiritual life! How many, apparently affectionate and winning and generous abroad, among friends almost of a day, are full of petty jealousies and rivalries, even of strife and anger, at home! Deplorable indeed is that habit which leads us away from our own first friends, our own flesh and blood, among whom we were meant to exercise all Christian graces, ourselves trusted and trustful! Few things are sadder in the after years, when there are many vacant places in the old home, or perhaps the home itself is broken up, than the remembrance of an unloving heart, an ungenial disposition; the remembrance of confidence withheld, and love taken away, from those to whom, in

GOD'S good Providence, they were first due. This is much worse, really, than the experience of having failed, through no fault of ours, to keep the confidence of our own. This, after all, was our LORD'S experience, of whom we are told, "Neither did His brethren believe on Him." And this may be borne, and turned to good, through our patient continuance in love. By submission, by cheerfulness, by being perfectly frank and unselfishly kind, we may win back to our hearts those alienated from us, and so make the home once more the joyful and pleasant abode of dwellers in unity.

XXVII.

PARTINGS AND MEETINGS.

"When forced to part from those we love,
Though sure to meet to-morrow,
We yet a kind of anguish prove,
And feel a touch of sorrow."

ANON.

No home on earth can be our perfect rest. There are no really unchangeable mansions here. This life of ours has its ebb and flow, its eddyings and its currents, even in that dear harbour which sheltered us from our earliest years.

Home, if well ordered, if kept and blest by the all-seeing Eye and the all-hearing Ear, is indeed a most happy place. But the time comes when we must be severed from it, for days, or months, or years. The Captain of our Salvation would not have us fixed for ever on one spot. He would have us remember that ours must be a moving tent, and that we must be always ready to depart, even before the final separation, from our habitation and our friends.

1. There is a day, never to be forgotten in after-life, on which the boy, still in his childhood, is called

"To leave the safe and sacred walls of home."

It is no mere sentiment to speak of the agony of going for the first time to school. In that hour there is dug a deep hole in the heart, never to be completely filled up. Many an elderly man could tell you the exact spot on which his mother parted from him on that black day, long years ago; the actual words which he heard his father say as he left him in that unknown world of school. The very fact that those words were of blessing and of hope; that the look on mother's face, amid those surroundings, was a look of sympathy and love—though full of encouragement to the lonely child, made the heart softer to receive an indelible impression. And though we feel at such times that a new stage on life's journey is begun, we do not pass at a bound, or without labour and travail, from boyhood to manhood. Even in the one old school where they profess to do so, it is but a change in name. Yes, even in the wide, wide world, the boy nature still abides in that of the man; and the better and simpler part of youth, with its true tenderness, its innate love of home, continues on, though he be learning gradually to "put away childish things."

It is a dull heart indeed that does not rejoice

greatly at the coming of the holidays—a heart inhumanly treated, that does not gladly anticipate the meeting with the old familiar faces. Yes, and even a heart so repelled keeps a warm corner for those who ought to love it. Which of us can think, unmoved, of the poor Wykehamist scholar, left alone when all the rest of the boys were gone their happy ways, composing in his solitude the immortal "Dulce Domum," and then dying of a broken heart? Or who among us, hearing the pathetic song of "Home, Sweet Home," does not feel his thankfulness for his own blessings quickened, when he remembers that the one who wrote it was a wanderer, who never knew what a home was?

O happy meetings, how much they compensate us for unforgotten partings! We part to meet, and quickly the time comes round.

2. Again, there is the marriage day, when the daughter of the house, wedded to him she loves, does yet, amid her perfect joy, feel, in the deep of her heart, a pang at the thought of those who must be left behind, and the dear old haunts which can never be quite the same.

> "But they must go; the time draws on,
> And those white-favoured horses wait;
> They rise, but linger, it is late;
> Farewell, we kiss, and they are gone."

Yes, it is a real parting, but, to true hearts, a parting in GOD—a gain by reason of the loss. To

Christian man and maid entering on the estate which the LORD calls "honourable," to Christian families enlarging the circle of their home, such days bring not clouds, but only (as the poet terms them) "cloudlets," dispersed by the brightness of Heaven, and forgotten in the dawning of a hope. What a contrast to those which are, for us, irreparable partings! The Laureate plays *harmonics* when he sings, in the sense of his own great grief which he had for a moment compared with this—

> "Ay me! the difference I discern,
> How often shall her old fireside
> Be cheered with tidings of the bride,
> How often she herself return!"

3. Again, some of us have experienced the trial of departure in search of health, the feeling, which makes the heart stand still, that we may never come back, or that great changes may befall those from whom we are taking leave. It is not merely the morbid soul, the "exile from himself," who, with life blighted, clings in heart to the fatherland, and, the more remote he is, longs all the more to get back. It is the loving, unselfish man, the dutiful, obedient child, the devoted, patient wife, that realize to the full the bitterness of going away, even when there is a bright prospect of thorough renewal and recovery. GOD means us to feel such afflictions, for our homes are types of His; and the loss, even for a little while, of the sight of those

we love, should make us ask ourselves why we can ever part from Him who loves us perfectly.

And remembering this, and remembering also that He will never leave us nor forsake us, we must go forth cheerily and hopefully, trusting completely to the counsel of our physician, and the sympathy of our friends, and the prayers of those who shall be separated from us "in presence, not in heart," and, above all, to the unchanging love, the ceaseless communion, of Him who is our GOD and FATHER, afar off as well as near. "He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed"—the good seed of patient waiting upon GOD, and of care and thought, even in his own sickness, for others, and of faithful penitence under the chastening Hand —"shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him." Ah! even should those who part from him see here his face no more, the home will have his influence and memory and life, and the assurance that in Paradise, the heart's true home, he waits for them and is eternally one with them in CHRIST.

4. Once more, not a few have to realize, in all its bitterness, the breaking up of the household of our affection, the parting of *all* the members from the beloved place which is full of associations. It is, of course, quite true that there is a union of hearts in the family circle, which does not depend upon any local habitation. Yet we are all more or less creatures

of circumstance, and even the nooks and corners of our dwelling, the very scents of the garden, the books and pictures in each room—which are nothing to a stranger—are almost a part of ourselves. They go to make up, at least, the settings of a home, the framework of that which to us is love. It is not wrong, it is only true to nature, true (we may reverently say) to the purposes of GOD, that we should cherish such scenes as precious. For all these things—some comparatively great, some very little in themselves—help us to understand, not theoretically but practically, that family life, home relationships, are "the germ of our very existence" —that we are to live for each other in the LORD. And though to have to see the sundering of the outward ties, the dissolution of the visible home is a very different thing from loosening those ties ourselves, and bringing discord and irreligion into the home; yet the call to depart and to part cannot be heard without pain, nor yet obeyed without inward reluctance. Let us console ourselves with the thought that the love does not change with change of place, and that it is better, as *David Elginbrod* suggests, "to leave the home whence all the homeness has vanished," that as "the body is of little value after the spirit, the love, is out of it, so the house and all the old things are little enough, after the loved ones are gone who kept it alive and made it home." When the old haunts of happy childhood

are altered and darkened by the departure of those who made it bright for us, we must look up more faithfully to Him who is our Home.

For in the eyes of Him who creates time, there is "no rest, but a living sacred change, a journeying towards rest. He alone rests; and He alone, in virtue of His rest, creates change." So that it is His voice which says, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest." It is He who blends in love our meetings and our partings here, and who bids us, even when our hearts are most deeply afflicted by the separations of time, go forward manfully in the Christian life till it issues in eternity, and we meet again, to part no more.

XXVIII.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

"Here once my step was quickened,
Here beckoned the opening door,
And welcome thrilled from the threshold
To the foot it had known before."

LOWELL.

WHEN we speak of home, we not only connect the thought of it with years of abiding love and unbroken intercourse, not only with moments of sad partings and delightful reunion, but also with those long seasons of separation, which make us yearn for it. Such seasons are solaced, no doubt, and cheered, by the frequent letters which gladden men's loving hearts, or the few letters which reach their "trembling hands." Such seasons are not always quite full of anxiety or of heart-sinking, for there is work to be done in them, and new friends to be cherished, and means to be provided for the wants of those at home. Such seasons, again, are not without their spiritual privileges or their religious opportunities, or their happy openings for doing good to others.

But, after all, there is a prolonged trial about such times; and the *Heimweh* needs its interpretation to us, that we may understand aright the voices which speak therein from ourselves, our friends, and our GOD.

1. Are we quite wearied of the old saying, that "absence makes the heart grow fonder"? Is it not one of those commonplaces which are never exactly commonplace, because so true to life, so comforting for love? In this rough world we must not despise anything which makes for tenderness. What a witness we all have in ourselves to the power of gentle love, its winning, attractive, softening power. Even the fiery and lighthearted soldier of the French army suffers, in his distant march, yes, and on his conquering route, real pain from the *malade-du-pays*. And the home-loving Englishman, practical and enterprising as he is, finds sometimes in his soul a grief too deep for tears, as he recollects the far-off little ones of his house, the wistful partner of his life.

It is one thing, like the Lotos-eaters,

> "To dream of fatherland,
> Of child and wife,"

and to fall asleep in selfish ease; but quite another thing to act as a man parted from his own, resolving, as soon as possible after his work is done, for their sakes to return to them again.

Where lies one chief pathos of the dear, familiar hymn, "Lead, kindly light"? Where, but in that sorrowful confession, "I am far from home," which is the more felt in the spiritual life, because it is so vividly descriptive of the natural? How often we feel this home-sickness as a sort of passion, over which we cannot always gain control, and on which our reason does not always keep its hold! It is remarkable, for instance, how at the end of a long voyage, when the separation has lasted for many months and is all but over, the craving for the sight of those we love is well-nigh unbearable. Yes, indeed, but it is all to make our affection more tender, less selfish--alike for the beloved who is gone, and for the beloved whom we shall see perhaps to-morrow.

"O days and hours, your work is this
To hold me from my proper place,
A little while from his embrace,
For fuller gain of after-bliss:

"That out of distance might ensue
Desire of nearness doubly sweet;
And unto meeting, when we meet,
Delight a hundredfold accrue."

2. And then we think of *them*, and of their thoughts for us, their loyal loving recollection of us, all these days and years. How earnestly they have prayed for us, stood up for us, wept for us, rejoiced to know that it was well with us, followed

our wanderings, interested themselves in our interests, and were careful over our cares!

We seemed to range apart from them, but the longing in our hearts testified really to the longing in theirs, as "star to star vibrates light." We have been all along attracted to each other and by each other; and having the holy confidence of faith, we need none to come between us and say, It is well. For our souls are assured of this; and we know that all the while we feel most lonely, we are really sustained by the companionship which no distance can break, the intercession which knits us closely together as indeed one in the LORD.

Or if where we seemed to be drawn we have found desolation, and the loving welcome which we longed for cannot be given us here, was it all in vain—that craving for their presence, that desire to commune with them as before? Surely we need not think so.

"Hear those higher voices calling,
Come, O come;
From that saintly region falling,
Our best home.
Thither have my loved ones entered,
There be our affections centred
In the heavenly home."

3. But there is a deeper meaning yet in this mysterious yet most real aching of the heart—a deeper meaning in that GOD Himself is infinitely

greater than the godly, and His everlasting friendship unspeakably more attractive, more inviting, than the reunion with those earthly friends, whom yet He sends and wishes to invite and attract us. Homeless wandering, wandering in search of home, the hurrying homewards of those who have wandered long, bear upon them GOD'S witness and call to us. As we travel along the highway we realize that there is no home on the grand stern mountains which seem to bar our path; no home in the wide fields and forests, with their cold or gloomy solitude; no home in the shadow of the hedges[1]—these are but marks of others' property, boundaries which can be crossed only by trespassing. And if in our journeyings and our campings we feel that we are, in some sense, outcasts from GOD, or trying to hide ourselves from His Presence which is in Heaven, it may sometimes be borne in upon us, that that would be indeed a sweet and beautiful compulsion were He to compel us to come in, and be at rest. Here, for many of us, is the secret of that inward yearning —the instinct which tells us where, and where only, it can be completely and for ever satisfied.

"Far from my heavenly home,
Far from my FATHER'S breast,
Fainting I cry, Blest SPIRIT, come
And speed me to Thy rest."

[1] Compare St. Luke xiv. 23.

But our SAVIOUR'S teaching reminds us, after all, that GOD'S desire for us, and the Divine travail of our own soul, can be partly accomplished in us, through our restoration, even here, to those who have missed us many days. The Bethlehem to which the pilgrim comes back, after long absence, is an earthly city, as well as a celestial one—a well-known place, in which we can say with Naomi, "The LORD hath brought me home again."

Oh! whatever there is, in any among us, of the wanderer or the exile (and the confession makes us recollect that there is something of it in us all), may our heart's desire blend with the yearning of the LORD, and work out our eternal restoration. Much ground remains for many of us—many a Hill of Difficulty to be climbed, many a Doubting Castle to be passed in safety or to be escaped from in darkness, many waves of this troublesome world to be battled with—ere we behold our dear native land.

Let us encourage one another—not stand in each other's way, or be afraid to speak about the duty of returning, or shrink from showing, by our own brave and penitent lives, the path which tends to peace.

How touching in its simplicity is that last letter of the heroic Father Damien from the house of his suffering pilgrimage among the plague-stricken dwellers on the lonely isle! "During your long travelling road homewards, please do not forget

the narrow way. We both have to walk carefully, so as to meet together at the Home of our common and eternal FATHER."

Travelling days will be over then, and, if we are truly penitent, the days of spiritual wandering, and the nights of great fear and care when we felt that we might never get back. May we be much in earnest now, setting our faces resolutely towards Heaven, making our love of home a help, not a hindrance, in mounting higher! Gradually, His peace will guard us, and His glory lighten upon us, partly here, as fully there, and His Presence will be round about us on every side. And so will our word to Him be a word of holy hope and humble trust—

> "We cannot lose ourselves where all is home,
> Nor drift away from Thee."

XXIX.

THE SOBERNESS AND STEADFASTNESS OF LOVE.

"Let come what will, at last the end is sure,
And every heart that loves with truth is equal to endure."

TENNYSON.

THIS is the true spirit of home. This is the central stay, the central motive. This brings the wanderer back, blesses all partings and meetings, bars the growth of selfishness. Herein we mark the under-tone of specially mirthful times, the under-current of stormier and sadder days. Hereby the years of training are kept from over-much severity, and happy commemorations from unhealthy excitement, and the members of the household, present or absent, are held together in the bonds of mutual affection, sympathy, and trust.

Our homes, of course, are very different, and the experience of one home will be far above that of another, and much below that of a third. But on the whole, taking any number of ordinary abodes and families, in any rank of life, we shall find that the links which unite the members are no mere

passing enthusiasms, but just this steady, quiet, Christian love.

Let us rest awhile in the thought of this, many of us simply in memory, with the softened regret of those who have loved and lost; many of us with the desire to make our own homes more like what *He* would have them to be, of whom every family in Heaven and earth is named; and some of us with the joyful feeling that even now, amid many difficulties and disappointments, we can enter daily into the peaceful gladness of this best inheritance on earth, which is fitting us for the mansions of our FATHER'S House, for its perfect love and perfect joy.

1. Love's fount is in the home. Its stream, indeed, is perennial, ever increasing in volume, ever widening its banks. But like the brook of the conduit out of a garden, it began by "watering abundantly my garden bed, and lo! then my brook became a river, and my river became a sea." Only we cannot forget the source in the stream, nor can we imagine that the stream will run uphill. Charity must begin at home. It is not floating, as it were, in the world's wide sphere, that we may draw it off, and narrow it down, for the home. There, surely, through the good gift of GOD, is its origin, and there its earliest exercise. There is the secret of its further progress, its ever growing influence, and there, too, the promise of the

wonderful return, not up the hill, but by way of Heaven. As the poet sings—

"That which the fountain sends forth returns again to the fountain."

Just as, in this material heart of ours, the life-blood, which it circulates all through the body, rushes first into its own valves and vessels; so, if our homes are to extend to broader circles, and for more distant needs, the love which is to gain GOD'S blessing, the home itself must be the first to profit by that heavenly, beautiful, beneficent grace.

Love must abide there as the guiding principle, the actual home-spirit; love, shown in "concord and tender affection between husband and wife," in kindly considerateness between master and man, the mistress and her maidens; love, proved by courteous veneration towards the old, by watchful reverence towards the young; love, keeping up unselfish habits in the children, sympathy in joy and sorrow among all; love, never failing, always hopeful, always helpful, never out of tune.

2. And the course of this is even and quiet. If, according to the true proverb, Still waters run deep, what depth of affection is found under the outward stillness of a household at unity with itself! What the Church is to her faithful members, in the peaceful round of holy service, that will the right rule and Christian culture and happy natural intercourse of family life be. As, at seasons of great joy

in the LORD, the higher festivals of His Church, the even tenor of Divine worship is lifted up awhile to a grander level of ritual and song; so, in the home of those who love each other with a pure and kindly fervour, we realize, from time to time, on special anniversaries, or in moments of peculiar felicity or hope, the intensity of our regard and sympathy for one another; and then, like the Church herself, taking the lower note and the simpler mode till the times of rejoicing return, we go forth again on our familiar path, with love as the hidden fire, the moving principle, but not thinking it necessary, nor feeling it quite natural, to be very demonstrative. even towards those most cherished in our heart. It is not that we act upon the cold maxim of the man of the world, bidding us beware of zeal, but rather that, because our zeal is deep and earnest, we need not force it into prominence, content to feel its inner warmth held in reserve for those we love, and assured that it abides as really and as continuously in them.

For Christian men there is a special reason for this calm sobriety of affection. It is the claim of the holy Cross, advanced, not to make us gloomy or despondent, still less, repellent or unloving to those around us, but to keep us brightly serious, religiously affectionate. Our own history and the history of CHRIST, our anticipations and His promises, alike constrain us, while loving much, to dwell under the

Cross. Those who, after careless and self-indulgent lives—

> "Have come,
> To know pure joys of home,
> And for the hurry and haste of younger years
> Have taken the hearth that cheers,
> And the fair realm of duty, and delight
> Of innocent faces bright,"

those who, amid the gladness of their homes, and the strong desires of their hearts, have still borne in mind the sufferings of their LORD and HEAD; those who stay themselves, alike in disappointment and success, in alienation and in friendship, on the expectation of the joys of Heaven; those (and sometimes one character combines them all) learn for themselves that even our happiest earthly homes, our purest and deepest affection, must be marked by that Cross—

> "Which may throw o'er hope and memory,
> O'er life and death, its awful charm."

3. But always let us remember also, that the very atmosphere of home must be a patient abiding in love. Steadfastness is the sure sign of a man's love, as much as love is the one sign of his life. Love has the Eternal Nature in it. Even we, with our poor measure of love, are akin, in our loving, to GOD who is Love; and as we bind ourselves to hold fast our talent and to enlarge it, its precious and Divine

character becomes more manifest to us, and we are enabled to be followers of GOD as His beloved children, and to let patience have her perfect work therein. What a call to patience in intercession for those we almost idolize, is presented by the comfortable word, that "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife!" What a warning from Heaven against even a passing disregard of the peril of our dear ones, breathes in that pathetic question, "How knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?"

Love suffers long, prays without ceasing, never loses sight of its object. Love, with all its quietness, all its reticence, all its sobriety, keeps moving side by side with those it loves, intent, if possible, on speaking heart to heart, ready for any sacrifice, so that those for whom it suffers loss may but gain eternally. Be this the spirit of our life, the settled purpose of our regard for others. What joy if we are allowed in this way to draw them homeward, to lift them heavenward! It is a high and holy aim. "CHRIST in us" is "the hope of glory," not for ourselves only, but for all whom we love in Him. His Cross brings us "the length and breadth and depth and height" of that hope, and the more we live by it, the more steadfast, and pure, and spiritual will our love for others be, and the more will they be constrained (GOD grant it!) to find true joy, with us, in heavenly things—our union here raising us,

still in sight of the Cross, to the everlasting union with Him who loved us all.

"There, as we gaze, may we become
United, LORD, to Thee,
And, in a fairer, happier home,
Thy perfect beauty see."

XXX.

THE NEW NESTS AND THE OLD ROOF-TREE.

"And doubtful joys the father move,
And tears are on the mother's face,
As parting with a long embrace
She enters other realms of love;
Her office there to rear, to teach,
Becoming, as is meet and fit,
A link among the days, to knit
The generations each to each."

TENNYSON.

THE home reproduces itself. It is like the plant which bears forth "kindly fruit," "fruit after its kind," upon the earth; fruit to serve not only as "bread to the eater," but as "seed to the sower," that so again, through the wonder-working power of GOD, the seed may grow into the plant, and itself again be fruitful. It is like the nest of the parent-bird, sheltering her young and providing them with cherishment and food, and then sending them out, in due season, to gather sustenance for themselves, and to take to them their mates, and use their heaven-sent instinct, for building a shelter, in turn,

for their little ones, and feeding them as they themselves were fed.

We in England owe much to this power of the home to reproduce itself. Generation after generation has spread the charm and grace of some old ideal household, and proved it to be as a tree "whose seed is in itself."

In thousands of homes to-day we see the beautiful culture, the gentle courtesies, of years gone by. We might trace them back, past many unions with side streams, to the life and conversation of some chivalrous and noble character, some pure and loving woman. And this handing on, from father to son, from a mother to her descendants, of all that makes home happy, of the home-spirit, in short, has spread on all sides, and has rendered this old country of ours, in a very special sense, the fatherland of family life.

Long may it be so! and ever may we value it as such, instead of leaving it to strangers and foreigners to admire it.

1. That this may continue to be our happy portion and privilege, let us, one and all, cultivate, as we enter on new homes, the best traditions of the home which made us what we are. The new cannot, indeed, should not, be a mere copy of the old. Fresh interests centre round it. Fresh influences go to form it. Its circumstances, its environment, must be very different. But it can take an impress and character

from what has been proved to us as excellent, in our childhood and youth. Who that has known the blessing of family prayer, of Scripture reading, would not think it dishonouring to GOD, disrespectful towards his own parents, to let such habits go by? Who that has felt the harmony, the refreshment, the rest, the strength, wrought by music, would not wish his own house, his own sons and daughters, to be brightened and uplifted in like manner? Even the fun and mirth which lessened trouble, and lightened difficulties, are well worth transplanting to the fresh soil, and may even spring up anew there, as native wit, rightly rejoicing the heart. Homely things are not trifles to the home-born. And some homely ways are among our best aids in after-life. They are the living coals which warm us in our dwellings—the habits of prayer, and love, and sympathy, and faithfulness to GOD and man—drawn from what may well be called the sacred fire of the hearth round which we gathered in happy childhood.

2. But again, the new home helps us to appreciate the blessings which we met with in the old. It is often when the married daughter has children of her own, that she learns for the first time to love her mother deeply, and to realize that mother's far deeper love for her. The father's patient work for his sons, his readiness to wait for the development of their character, his habit of making allowance

for them—have a new light shed upon them as those sons of his are gaining their own experience. The very words which father or mother said to us, their actual warnings and reproofs, and expressions of hope and encouragement, come back to us, years afterwards, as the watchwords of our life, making our homes and our occupations instinct with quickening principles, and with occasions for serving GOD and strengthening others.

3. Moreover, we ourselves in mature age are the same as we were in early youth. The fact that we were dependent then and are independent now, does not break the continuity of our lives. Home made us, not only what we were, but what we are.

> "The child is father of the man,
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety."

Yes, it is exactly that. Piety—the deep, affectionate, respectful regard of a child for his parent—is the word which expresses the link between our heart of to-day, with all its sense of defeat and disappointment, and the pure, happy, hopeful days spent long ago under our mother's eye at home. The contrast, in time and place and events, between those days and these, forms part of the valuable side of memory; and we do well to summon it up. For, though when we became men we rightly put away childish things, we ought to have been able to keep

the childlike spirit, which is the object of true veneration in this world, and the earnest of free entrance into that which is to come.

4. Once more, it ought to be borne in mind that it is not right that in the old circle our place should know us no more. We are wanted sometimes; certainly our prayers are often needed, and always our love, by the old folks at home. We are apt to be selfish and forgetful, even with regard to those who cherish us the most. We are absorbed in our cares and duties and interests, and too often we fail to remember those amid which we formerly moved, and which were then so all-important to us, as they still are to others. Who would not be cheerful and ready to bear some part of that burden, to live for the old home as if he still lived in it, and to let its inmates feel that they are never forgotten, never neglected?

We are called in, at times, from all sides; called back in a great sorrow, or when some anxious trouble goes round the widely-scattered family party; called back to comfort one another, or to cheer the parting soul of one without whom we had never been.

Each might think that the rest can do without him. Yet love is too strong to let us hold aloof. Each hears the pleading voice, as it were addressed only to himself, bidding him come while yet there is time, and offering benediction. Surely,

it is the old familiar image of the parent bird, so beautifully associated with the tender words of our LORD.

"But be thou gathered: one and all
Those simple nestlings see,
How hurrying at their mother's call,
To their one home, whate'er befall,
In faith entire they flee."

Finally, these mingled feelings of ours point surely heavenward. The mother welcomes back her son, who has moved with his wife elsewhere. Sickness comes upon him, and now "heart and mind and soul are all for going home."[1] And he goes, and then passes away.

If the new abode, with its fresh interests and comforts and joys, is so delightful to us here, while yet about the earlier one, the nest of infancy and childhood, the human heart keeps tender and thankful recollections—we need not love our earthly homes the less, because we seek, with passionate earnestness and cheerful hope, the heavenly country as our very own, our FATHER'S House on high.

[1] The actual words of a mother, said to the writer concerning her son.

XXXI.

THE SPHERE OF GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY.

"So should we live, that every hour
May die as dies the natural flower,
A self-reviving thing of power."

LORD HOUGHTON.

NOWHERE more than in our home should we see the religious value of the present; nowhere should we be more careful to make use of it. This may seem a mere truism; but it is just one of those truths which are before the eyes of us all, though so few discern them. Home is the field of habit; and we get so much used to its sights and sounds and common ways that we forget again and again the calls to duty and to charity, to self-sacrifice and forbearance, and ignore the silent teaching of most excellent examples, as well as the words of wisdom, kindness, and courage, which we should be gathering up day after day.

Nor is it a complete answer to say that in many a home, perhaps in our own, example has pointed the other way, and that foolish, harsh, and cowardly

words have tainted the atmosphere which should have been pure and healthy. For homes like these have great opportunities also for any member who will use them. The angel in the house is often the one who first rises above the evil surroundings, and then, as angels love to do, draws others upward with himself. The innocence of the child, the beauty of the childlike character, the power of a single penitent becoming again as a little child, is enhanced by the bad companionship in which it shines, and on which it acts like awakening light. What joy for a soul which is brave enough to confront such lives, and loving enough and persevering enough to win them to better things!

And if this be so in such cases as these, what a responsibility rests on those whose homes are ordered well, and for whom all sorts of bright and helpful influences are ready! For these the saying, "Live while you live," is no mere Epicurean motto. Rather, it marks, in a most Christian spirit, the need of realizing the truly happy life of a truly good home, of living rightly among those who are patterns of holy living, of exercising in daily life for others the powers and the talents which, as we see proved by the lives of those around us, are "given to profit withal."

If these precious years go by, and these priceless opportunities are neglected, how can we tell that any such openings will be offered us again? Home

may be much altered soon; and when we are once absent from it, or once alienated from it, we may lose the opening for ever. Which of us, under such circumstances, may not have to say, as Æmilia says to Iago, and with as keen a presentiment—

"Perchance I will ne'er go home."

Troubles or changes of mind, body, or estate may come and alter everything. He may not be as grand a poet as Shakespeare, but he is true to life, who says—

"Who knows when he to go from home
Departeth from his door,
Or when or how he back shall come,
Or whether never more?
For some who walk abroad in health,
In sickness back are brought;
And some who have gone forth with wealth,
Have back returned with nought." [1]

So, while we are at home, it will be worth anything to us to cultivate the home-spirit and to consecrate the home-life, to make those who dwell there merry and bright, and to be cheerful and unselfish companions for them.

We cannot begin too soon. The early years are those which form the thankful and the helpful mind. As Milton reminds us—

"The childhood shows the man,
As morning shows the day."

[1] Whittier.

How delightful it is when the children are not only sunny in themselves, but do their best to shed sunshine over the house; when, without being morbid or unreal, they do indeed live for others, as if banded in a ministering league, rejoicing in the rule of doing good!

And then as youth comes, and rejoices to find its strength, how much happier when this too is a time for considerateness, for attention to the wishes of father and mother, for the exercise of all courteous and pleasant gifts!

And so the habit is formed, and the father in his manhood makes the home, or, rather, blesses GOD for having made it, and himself does his best for it, uses his powers, grave and gay, to keep his boys happy and useful, and gets their sisters to make the house attractive for them, and is "not forgetful to entertain strangers" there, so that brightness and comfort and sympathy and love may radiate thence to others.

Is there any country in the world which more strikingly suggests to us, even by outward signs, the beauty and the blessing of home? This "old England" of ours, which the anagram changes into "golden land," is called so, not only for its yellow harvests, but for its witness to the true cheerful life of the people in every part and in every grade. When the historian of Europe is describing the territory of the various nations, two only, Switzer-

land and England, seem to him to fulfil, by their appearance, this ideal. Each of these two present the picture which we crave for. The contemplation of such a land "reveals the home of infancy, the paradise of youth, the scene of domestic love, the hearth of filial affection, the first opening of life, where its sunshine was still unclouded by its shade."[1] The Church towers, "the kneeling hamlet," the ancestral mansion, the quiet parsonage, the well-ordered cottage, the village school, the very blacksmith's forge, the seats under the trees, the cricket field where all are equal and all are interested—these are the sights which our colonists regretfully and thankfully remember, and which make this "a delightsome land" to our kith and kin across the Atlantic—these are the sights which help us to realize what we ourselves enjoy, and how much we ourselves should use the benefits of our heritage.

"Still let us love this spot of earth,
The best where'er we roam,
And duly estimate the worth
Of our dear English home."

Yes; and still let us do our best, each of us, in the abode wherein GOD has placed him, whether on this side of the great and wide sea or on that, to show that we do value this gift of His, by doing all we can to brighten and gladden our home; to

[1] See Alison, vol. vi. p. 128.

make it a dwelling full of light and comfort to all, whoever they are, that live therein; to render it, by unselfish love and unwearied service, the preparation for that Eternal Home whence we shall go no more out.

XXXII.

LONG AND FAITHFUL SERVICE.

"Home they brought her warrior dead;
She nor swoon'd nor uttered cry;
All her maidens, watching, said,
'She must weep, or she will die.'

. . . . .

"Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Laid his child upon her knee;
Like summer tempest came her tears,
'Sweet my child, I live for thee.'"

TENNYSON.

IT is a high calling which is given to the servants of the home. For theirs is the direct following of the LORD Himself, who "came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister"; and to follow Him, alike in lowliest offices and in some great work of self-sacrifice and lasting toil, is indeed a noble and happy thing.

There is a true band still of such disciples of the lowly, loving JESUS. Not a few are, for His sake, doing GOD service in loyally serving men. How many a Deborah is found in the happiest homes!

How many an Eliezer proves himself absolutely trustworthy in his master's house! How many an Obadiah shows the best sort of fidelity towards those set over him by keeping on the side of GOD!

And who that knows the true blessing of a Christian home will not say that a great part of that blessing is due to the servants of the family? Ay, is not one of the best gifts for which many have to thank the LORD that of "trusty, frugal, and diligent servants?"[1]

It only wants more thought, more considerateness towards those who serve us, to enlarge this benediction of the home. But it is often after we have parted from such friends, or been bereaved of them, that we understand how much we owe to them.

Our debt begins in early childhood. Who can tell the measure of gratitude due to the one who took care of us in infancy and through those all important first years? Holy Scripture emphasizes the zeal and love bestowed by an apostle on his converts by likening it to that wherewith "a nurse cherisheth her children." And surely this is very great and very wonderful. She will do anything for them. To guard them by day, she is ready to brave any danger; to preserve them from fear or from disease or peril, she will be set in her watch whole nights; she will mind neither trouble nor fatigue, neither loss of sleep nor lack of food, to

[1] See Bishop Andrewes' Devotions.

keep them well and happy. What is her one reward? Apart from the Divine blessing which, if a Christian woman, she will care for most, the only thing she craves for is the children's love. And surely it is ready for her; indeed, it is part of the home-spirit, and is shown in that life-long thankfulness and affection which regards the old nurse almost in the light of a mother, and which is found as strongly in the manly son as in the gentle daughter.

And it is almost the same with any other faithful members of the household. Gradually, through patience and forbearance and sympathy on our part, through obedience and unselfishness and straightforward ways on theirs, the tie of mutual regard grows very strong. They share all our joys and all our sorrows. They kneel with us in our family prayers and at the holy Altar. They take note of our interests, and even in little matters we find real help from them—help which is given freely and lovingly and so as to win its way to our hearts; for, as Wordsworth said to a child, to show her that of humblest friends she should scorn not one—

"Small service is true service while it lasts."

And these little acts, being done by them, "not with eye-service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing GOD," become in time habits of kindness, done almost as of course, and taken by

us as so done, but really implying continued self-sacrifice, unfailing devotion.

Little by little such diligence and loyalty gains its blessings, and the true servant becomes the friend of the family, able to give good advice, and advice that is welcomed and acted upon. Even the little maid that waited on Naaman's wife can offer counsel such as alters that noble soldier's life entirely. And he himself, though enraged at first at the orders of Elisha, has the grace at last to follow the suggestions of his servants, and to humble himself for the blessing of the LORD. And is there not a sacred history, written in the memory of many, which speaks of the quiet influence, the lasting effect, wrought upon life and character by the truthfulness, or courage, or self-denial, the seasonable word, or the mature judgment, of an earnest servant? Has not such an one constrained more highly cultured souls, persons of much greater mark in the world, to a life above mere culture, and to the attainment of a peace which the world could never give? Does not such an one bring us to healing tears, to a blessed submission?

A servant so helpful to us is indeed as "a brother beloved," as a very sister and bosom friend—a treasure from which, to our great grief, we may be called outwardly to part, like Jacob from Rebekah's nurse, at "the oak of weeping," but

which remains truly our own, enriching us for others and for ourselves.

And there is another point much to be noticed. One of the most common complaints in these days is that which refers to the difficulties and disappointments connected with those whom we engage to serve us. Yet, after all that may be said, and truly said, on this sad marring of the home-life, it must be owned that those who rule the household might often gain the attachment and the fidelity, which are such a blessing to all concerned, if they would but condescend (in the Christian sense) to the position of their servants, and try to understand their temptations and their weaknesses, and help them to train their hearts and minds and consciences in accordance with GOD'S holy will. Even if this bears no fruit in that particular family, the seed of better things is sown for the after life; and in the day when they all, as fellow-servants, stand before GOD, the reproof, or the counsel, or the pardon, or the compassion, may be proved to have borne immortal fruit.

O that our homes may remain, in this way, too, right Christian homes, brightened by the willingness of service, and the kindliness of authority! A great blessing will fall upon ourselves, if we care for the higher interest of those dependent upon us; if we act like the good centurion who went to JESUS on behalf of a suffering servant who was dear

to him, and gained not only health for him, but also increase of faith for himself. And great, too, is the blessing ready for the servants who take loving thought for those in whose homes they dwell. "The eyes of a maiden looking unto the hand of her mistress" are filled with light by Him, who hath given us all our work, and prospers us when we do it earnestly as unto Him. May we learn to make allowance for each other, and to pray for one another, and not to be "above" receiving instruction from those who are, though in the same house, in a different position to our own! And specially may we remember, whatever our position may be, "by love" to "serve one another," and to count it an exceeding great honour so to do, because it takes us nearer to our LORD, even to Him who would lift us to the habit of obedience and the life of humility, by Himself becoming obedient unto death, and labouring for men as "One that serveth."

XXXIII.

OUR REFUGE FROM THE WORLD.

"Wilt thou go forth into the friendless waste
That hast this Paradise of pleasure here?"

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD.

HOME is a sacred place to those who regard it rightly, a place where the Christian can take sanctuary when pursued by the temptations or the insults or the evil examples of men. He knows indeed, as the English allegory reminds him, that even there he may be in the very heart of "the City of Destruction," and that his real foes may be those of his own household; and so he is ready to depart, in spirit if not in body, should the SAVIOUR'S voice say to him, "Arise, let us be going."

But still he feels that if it is a true home, such as GOD meant it to be—such a home as might shelter him in infancy, boyhood, and youth, and keep good influences about him—then GOD is with him, and where GOD is, there must be something of a sanctuary, though but a little one. He calls it, as the poet does, his "shrine"—

"Fair scene of home's unsullied joys
To thee my burthened spirit flies,
When fortune frowns, or care annoys;
Thine is the bliss that never cloys,
The smile whose truth hath oft been tried;
What then are this world's tinsel joys
To thee, my own fireside?"

And as time goes on, he learns the blessing of such a refuge, and the great need for it.

1. The world is full of strife and tumult. The unseen things are then his stay, and they quiet his spirit. He knows himself a citizen of the invisible city, and rejoices to have his conversation there. But his lot is cast among men, and they will not let him always move in a higher plane from themselves. And indeed he himself feels his life conditioned by the things which are seen, and is sure that his character has to be formed and proved by contact with those around him, and with these he mingles, day after day. And so his very rest and refreshment (do we not speak as men?) will be found in things and places and persons which combine the outward element and the inward. In his home he can, in a sense, be seen, and yet he is also hidden there—seen and known of all men, of friends and enemies alike, and recognized as a human companion; and yet also secretly hidden there, as in a tabernacle, from the strife of tongues.

2. But besides, there is a glare and glamour about the world, which forces the mind and soul of gentle

and quiet women, and of men not a few, to depart, not in any morbid spirit but for the love of holier things and the better way, from those brilliant and deceitful lights, into a more secluded company. Clear "sunshine hours" are very different from the scorching, dusty rays, reflected from the rocky shallow soil of the alien world. They seem to burn and dry us up, and to give us no peace, no rest, no higher hope, no better purpose for our lives. What a blessing then is the little circle of hearts that care for us and love us purely and deeply! What a blessing the bosom of the great Church, in which, as very members now and at least called to be saints, we have our place of privilege and affection, and though "unknown" are "yet well known." Even if it is with you according to the prayer of a certain humble soul, that you are allowed to pass unnoticed through the world; there is, even here, a home for you, either in your own family, or in the household of CHRIST, where you are always welcome.

3. And the disappointments and sorrows of the world are very numerous and very bitter. How plainly we mark the traces of these in the sad and anxious faces which meet us daily in the streets! How painfully expressive they are of unrest, of unsatisfied longings, of unrewarded labour! Yet watch the faces, how they change, if only for a little while, at the greeting of a child, at the song of

the wife or the sister. Some "son of consolation" meets us in the home; and we feel that there is still something to live for, something to rejoice in. Life is not all a disappointment, nor has true joy forsaken the earth. At home, if real love is there, our very failures call out sympathy; our griefs afflict the rest; our stricken hearts cannot be entirely desolate. We have found a place of rest, a place wherein we can bear our losses and our afflictions, and feel, under GOD, the better for them. How cold in comparison, how heartless apparently, are those outside! They are not always really so, but we cannot stop to consider them; we have work enough, simply to bear our trouble; and we flee away, to the dear quiet companionship of those who understand us—those who can be silent when we wish for silence, and can speak a word in season to us, when we feel that it would indeed be good for us to hear.

4. But to the Christian there is a deeper reason yet, for desiring to escape, from time to time, from the world which is passing away; to escape from it, but not by entering the cell of the anchorite, or the still corridors of the monastery. The great bulk of mankind was not made for seclusion or solitude, though all were created for GOD. Now what the thoughtful mind, the believing heart, feels most keenly about the world, is its want of spirituality, its godless, if not always ungodly tone. This is

discerned in its literature, its common talk, its very jests; in the absorbing character of its amusements, its business, its aims; in its debasement of science; in the way it shoulders out religion; in its attitude towards CHRIST; in its forgetfulness or its ignoring of that "other COMFORTER," whose work of life and sanctification belongs pre-eminently, so far as we know, to the dwellers on this planet.

And this want of spirituality is a deep trial to those who, with all their faults and all their imperfections, do yet realize the presence, and the goodness, and the power, and the operation, of the Almighty and most Holy LORD, who is Life and Light and Love. Happy are they (and surely they are a great multitude) who can find in their own homes "a mirror in an answering mind"; some hearts which not only love them, but also greatly love their LORD. That is a refuge indeed. Only, it reminds us that our intercourse with one another in the house, though always natural and never forced, should not, through shyness or reserve, exclude that which we know and feel to be the highest, deepest, truest interest which we have in common. We must gradually habituate ourselves to this; and as habit becomes a second nature with us, we shall find it easy and delightful to commune together, at times, and more and more frequently, of the things which concern our peace and our SAVIOUR.

It is beautiful to reflect that the scene of the fulfilment of that most pathetic and consoling prophecy will have been laid, in countless instances, in the home, ere the world was tried, or after the world was found wanting. "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another, and the LORD hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His Name."[1]

May it be ours to gain this refuge, and to know that those whom we love are His, and that He is ever with us!

So shall our earthly home be full of great joy to us. The "merry heart" will still be there, which "doeth good like a medicine"; and the social life, which is the cure of selfishness; and the varied occupations, wherein we learn to labour for each other's welfare, and to be interested in each other's talents; and the perfect sympathy which upholds us in common trials and comforts us in common sorrows. But there will be something better. For faith and hope, working by love in CHRIST, will carry us forward, alike as members of our own little family, and as belonging to the great and highly-favoured Family of GOD, to realize, even when we *must* be in the world, that—

"There is a blessed Home
Beyond this land of woe,

[1] Malachi iii. 16.

Where trials never come,
  Nor tears of sorrow flow;
Where faith is lost in sight,
  And patient hope is crown'd,
And everlasting light
  Its glory throws around."

XXXIV.

THE CHURCH OUR HOME.

"Though winds and waters rage and foam,
Though darkness towers like Egypt's night,
Here peace and safety find a home,
In this small Goshen there is light.
Thus built upon eternal truth,
High in mid heaven, o'er land and sea,
Christ's Church holds forth to age and youth
A beacon and a sanctuary."

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

WE must often have felt what an extreme case is put before us by the Psalmist as he sings, and suggests the words for our song, "When my father and my mother forsake me, the LORD taketh me up." But this surely teaches us that even the most awful and unnatural human desertion is no cause for despair of the Divine assistance. And so, if to some of us the refuge spoken of in the preceding pages does really fail, we see that we shall not be left comfortless in our lonely lives, or void of shelter in our conflict with this troublesome world.

There is a stay, and we are strong,
Our SAVIOUR is at hand:"

He, like the Good Samaritan, has brought us to an inn, and they will take care of us for His sake. We are placed in the charge of His Church; and in two senses this Church of His provides for us. The Church as a spiritual mother is ready to cherish and console us, so that in her faith we may share "the victory that overcometh the world." And the sanctuary of the Church, as the house of GOD, is also a veritable home to us, from which the tumult and unbelief and sorrow of the world may be shut out, as often as we resort thither.

O my soul, distracted sometimes in the midst of men, having fightings without thee and within thee fears, tried by many a conflict, many a temptation, yearning to serve CHRIST with a quiet mind, but rendered restless and anxious by those voices of doubt which yet cannot silence the voice of conscience; consider humbly with thyself thy own blessed dependence, thy own glorious liberty, thy own place of privilege both in the spiritual and material fabric; and make haste to use these things, while there is time, that thou mayest be able to persuade others also. And surely, all the baptized can say this to each other, as they reflect, not only upon the hope set before them hereafter, but also on their present way of escape from the tyranny and disturbance of the world.

1. Our mother Church is intended to be our true abiding home. Her Catholic Faith, her Apostolic

fellowship, her Divine continuity, her all-embracing charity, her never-daunted hope, her ceaseless prayers, her avenues to the invisible GOD, her patient waiting for CHRIST, her communion with the SPIRIT —all fit the Church to be ever a heavenly refuge for us on the earth. The Church is our home, "the home of life, and truth, and worship."[1] It is the home wherein our spiritual life can be unfolded, trained, and perfected, without that narrow pride which sees no holiness in others, no hope of others. It is the home which keeps for us all truth, never afraid of the sciences of GOD, and never parting with the Faith once for all delivered to the saints. It is the home in which (we speak not yet of the building made with hands) we all may meet for common worship to "our FATHER," not as if we had no individual needs, no words of our own to utter, but because as Churchmen we have also a corporate life, and all the members of the Body of CHRIST should devote themselves together to His service, and be partakers together of His joy. Even in our private dwellings we are not merely Christians unattached. The Holy Bible and the Book of Common Prayer in every bedroom, remind both child and stranger what is the secret of the home, and how its true life is bound up with the Word of the living GOD and with the witness of His worshipping Church. All estates of men in that holy Church

[1] See "Lux Mundi," p. 399.

can truly and godly serve Him, for the whole Body is governed and sanctified by His SPIRIT, and each, however small in the eyes of men, has his vocation and ministry in the sight of the LORD. The humble worker in the cottage, the two or three real believers who redeem the mansion from the realm of the world, the few examples of moral courage among the crowd who forget GOD, or deny Him—these, after all, are not fighting or praying quite by themselves. The Apostle's "helpers in CHRIST JESUS" are the nucleus of "the Church that is in their house." They know that the HEAD is with them, and that under His shadow they shall be safe, even with heathens near. As a spiritual power, a Divine refuge, the Church abides, silently inviting all, and telling all, in His Name, of rest. We wander far, we slumber long, but our feet come back, and our hearts are awakened. Then we gaze upon the prospect, and lo! below us and before us is the Church —our home of peace—lying, as Nazareth lies beneath the traveller's feet, "embedded in its little vale, like the Infant SAVIOUR in His mother's arms."[1] The poet gives us a sad picture of the child of guilt and sorrow, and sums up the misery of her forlorn condition, by saying, as in her person—

"And homeless near a thousand homes I stood."

[1] Lord Lindsay's Letters on the Holy Land.

But no true penitent need be utterly desolate; for the one home of the saints of GOD is the open home also for each sinner that returns to Him. The Church was founded by "the SAVIOUR of the world," as "a home in which man was to be through all the ages reconciled to GOD in knowledge and love."[1] Again, "It is a visible Church alone which is the home of the lonely" . . . which by sympathy "assures each soul as it is drawn to GOD, that it shall find around it strengthening hands and sympathetic hearts, which shall train it till, as in the quiet confidence of a home, it shall blossom into the full Christian life."[2]

2. And then, because of this spiritual motherhood of the Church, this divinely-commanded readiness on her part to receive all who truly repent and believe, there comes before us that other aspect of the Church as our refuge. Her houses of prayer provide for our bodies, souls, and spirits, wearied with the work and conflict of the world, refreshment, recreation, and repose—all the elements of a happy and peaceful home. The House of God is, or ought to be, our own familiar place, well known from childhood upwards. There we are given our Christian name, there brought into the LORD'S family, there regarded as His sons and daughters, there trained to regard ourselves as such. There,

[1] "Lux Mundi," p. 360 (Third Edition).

[2] Ibid. p. 377

as in a rightly-ordered home,[1] we hear the warnings of love, and feel the Fatherly Hand, and find a hiding-place in trouble. There we can kneel down, as if we were in our own little secret chamber, with the sights and sounds of the world excluded, and gain rest unto our souls, and deliverance from self, and the ever ready welcome of love. There can we be quieted, and gladdened, and stirred to action, and strengthened for our battle with the world, by GOD'S blessed gift of music, and His more precious gift of the sacred Word, and His greatest of all, "His unspeakable Gift"—the Bread of life, the quickening Presence of His risen and glorified SON. What a sanctuary for His glory! Lo! the world has lost its attraction. What a home for us to dwell in! Truly, the world has lost its power to hurt us. "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy House: they will be alway praising Thee."

3. Day by day, the world keeps pressing on the Church, now by coldness and indifference, now by false ideas of science, now by scorn, now by persecution, now by allurements to pleasure. But though members fall, the Church abides: and day by day, some realize that the world is passing away, and that it has failed them and disappointed them, and that there is something which it can neither give

[1] The writer ventures to refer, for fuller detail, to the volume contributed by him to the "Home Library" of the S. P. C. K. ("The House of GOD the Home of Man.")

them nor take from them; and GOD'S good SPIRIT leads them on to prove the Church for themselves —to try it from within, and no longer only from without—to join its faith and worship, and make these the realities of their life. Then, all is changed, and though they remain in the world, they are no longer of the world. They have found their true home, their never-failing refuge, in the Church of CHRIST; for the Church is His Body, and He is the Rock of her defence, in which all that labour and are heavy laden can find rest unto their souls.

XXXV.

THE JOYS OF MEMORY.

"I have a room whereinto no one enters,
Save I myself alone;
There sits a blessed memory on a throne,
There my life centres."

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

MEMORY brings us some of our worst sorrows, some of our greatest delights. The remembrance of a wasted youth, of talents buried or misused, of great opportunities lost beyond recall—remembrance extending, as we know,[1] to the unseen world—has in it unfathomed depths of misery. But in the recollection of a past happiness which made us thankful of past blessings, which gradually shaped our lives for good; of past love which, though removed outwardly, has continued to have a fruitful effect upon our character—we have seeds of joy, yielding their harvest both here and hereafter.

And among the truest pleasures of this kind, is

[1] St. Luke xvi. 25.

the memory of our old homes. It is not given to all of us. Some would fain forget the early years, the haunts of childhood, the associations of the shadow and the cares. Yet, even for these, there are some bright spots, some few dear souls on whom they love to dwell. In the thought of these, some of the darker lines are blotted out, and the retrospect gains by distance, till it seems almost lit up by sunlight, as, indeed, it is when men bear in mind how closely GOD'S lovingkindness and mercy have been following them all the days of their life. And, to most of us, home leaves sweet and precious reminiscences, which we do well to cherish as we go forward. Memory forms at once, little by little, during time present. Memory, except for physical infirmities, holds on tenaciously with us. Memory is bound up with some wonderful mystery of our being. Let my heart ponder these things that I may understand something of their joy.

1. The events and associations of our home, as soon as we begin really to take notice of them, begin also to forge themselves into a chain, which accompanies us all through our lives. The links are gradually wrought. They are moulded in the observation and enjoyment of quite tiny things, such as—

> "The little window, where the sun
> Came peeping in at morn,"

or the trifles, as men may deem them, of Cowper's

simple but imperishable lines.[1] Nothing, after all, is a trifle, which tends to cheer us, or others, afterwards; and it is a comfort to know that true pleasures, though they pass, are not mere evanescent things; even if they do not always prove the brilliant successes which we had pictured them beforehand, yet they leave the joy which we gained from them a real part of ourselves. And in greater matters of the home, as with a holy friendship, or a marriage of deep affection, or a life of self-denying service, there is ever an increasing sense of GOD'S goodness to us, an ever-growing assurance that it was well with us in those days, and that now we can thank Him all the more for them.

> "The past will always win
> A glory from its being far,
> And orb into the perfect star
> We saw not when we moved therein."

Memory is a sort of crown to us, when we have lived our lives like Christians and like men.

2. And this reminds us that the impression left upon our minds, by those sacred and delightful experiences, is practically indelible. The aged Barzillai is gratefully honoured by his king, who would even take him with him; but his mind goes back to the grave of his father and his mother, and to all that they were to him, long years before, and

[1] "On my mother's picture."

near them he desires to rest. What a life-like portrait, again, is that of the venerable man, bearing the child's heart still, the remembrance of mother's love, of father's discipline—

> "For whom home's happy radiance yet
> A steadfast beacon-fire appears,
> Bright through the storms, the stress, the fret
> Of seventy years."

It is, of course, a mere truism to say that those who are very old forget almost entirely their middle life, and travel back, with zest and great desire, to the time when they were young, and to the example and the teaching of their homes. Childhood and youth are the storehouse and citadel, from which they are never driven, and in which, as they wait upon the LORD, they renew their strength. "Once a man, twice a child," is not a mere proverb of reproach; it points something more than the moral of the weakness of age. It is a good and happy thing to look back, and to rejoice over the first bud and blossom of life, its simplicity and teachableness and confidence. It is a blessing to become, when so far on the journey homeward, once more like little children, ready to enter into the Kingdom of GOD.

3. Need we think it a dream, is it not rather a grand thought of the poet, which teaches us that as we look back, we bear witness to a mysterious rejoicing within ourselves—a spiritual memory of

something beyond and above the very earliest recollections of our earthly home, however delightsome this may have been?

> "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
> The soul that rises with us, our life star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar:
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From GOD, who is our Home." [1]

This it is which seems the secret of a "perpetual benediction" in "the thought of our past years." In childhood, and in those after times which cast us back upon our childhood, we have some witness within us of a higher nature, appealing to the nobler instincts of the creature—

> "Moving about in worlds not realized."

We may not here have matter for our faith to rest on. The poet himself deprecates such a claim. But as life itself is full of mystery, and as we cannot absolutely explain all our instincts or the whole of our memory, we need not be afraid to think that "Heaven was about us in our infancy," and that glimpses of the immortal life were granted to us from the very first.

. . . . . .

And now, bearing in mind how gradually, yet

[1] Wordsworth.

surely, the links are forged which bind our latest and our earliest years together; bearing in mind also, how indelible are the impressions which are being formed day by day—impressions which may not be erased in the world to come; bearing in mind, once more, the way in which we instinctively look backward as well as forward—let us say *this* to ourselves: Build for memory; aim now at the future, whether it be the future merely of to-morrow, or the boundless future involved in "Eternal judgment." This is no unpractical idea. We would not forget this present time, which alone we can call our own, or those present duties, which at all events are ready to our hands. But the present is ever passing, and the "hour that we think not" and see not, is always close to us. So, let us build for memory.

We can do so, by valuing the blessings which are ours now, the home which shelters us to-day, the familiar faces and kindly hearts amid which our lot is cast for this little while. Too often we ignore these, or are ungrateful for them, or make the worst of them. Can we wonder if, in doing so, we lay up in store a woe for future years? We will no longer act in this way. Surely "a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful." This will make all the difference to us, when it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.

Again, and partly by this very appreciation of our

own mercies, we shall go far towards insuring, in ourselves and others, happy memories not many days hence, by cultivating a thoroughly cheerful spirit. "A merry heart doeth good, like a medicine;" it helps to set the constitution of a Christian man. Cheerfulness is the sunshine of the soul. We may notice this in such widely divergent characters as Lord Palmerston, Sir Thomas More, Shakespeare, Leonardo da Vinci. The very mention of these men sheds a ray of light in our hearts. Their memory is sweet and gladdening. Whatever be our natural surroundings, whatever our troubles and our cares, let us rise above them, putting self aside, and trying to get good out of the ills of life, and to keep within us that "law of kindness," which is intent on helping and cheering others, instead of adding to their burdens by our gloomy countenance, or sour words.

"My home, my own dear home,
It is a happy place,
Where smiles of love are brightening
Each dear familiar face.

"O may I bring no shadow
Of sorrow or of care,
To dim the open brightness
Of happy faces there."

And, once more, it shall be our purpose, as we look forward, to go forward also in hope. We learn to value the gifts and friendships, the love

and sympathy, which we now enjoy. We learn to do our best for those among whom we abide, and to bid them be of good cheer, and to show them what it is to "rejoice in the LORD alway." But we also learn to advance continually in the patience and eager expectation of hope, looking for and hasting to the coming of the Day. A hopeful, diligent, loving life is the true building up of the soul. The hopes of to-day, wrought out in the work of faith, issue in the happy memories of to-morrow; and the old associations to which my heart looks back become the foretaste and earnest of infinitely better things, the very "substance of things hoped for;" and

"I taste e'en now the hallowed bliss
Of an Eternal Home."

XXXVI.

ANTICIPATIONS OF THE HOME BEYOND.

"And when a shadow falls across the window of my room,
Where I am working my appointed task,
I lift my head to watch the door, and ask
If He is come.
And the angel answers sweetly,
In my home,
Only a few more shadows,
And He will come."

B. M.

ALL things here point onward. The stages of our human life, the growth of our mental powers, the indelible hopes and fears which are part of our daily experience, all point onward. Decay expected, yet rather quickening than retarding our soul's progress; danger, if possible avoided, but still seen through; death, regarded not as a barrier, only as an avenue to something after death—all these point onward. The movements, not only of the planets in their orbits round our sun, but of the whole solar system, travelling wonderfully through space; these eyes of ours "not satisfied with seeing," and our

ears "not filled with hearing," but waiting always for some glorious sight and sound to be enjoyed in the "spiritual body," all are pointing onward for us. Memory itself, for ever glancing back on the past, and seeming in some manner to recall a being prior to these few years of our present existence, forbids any "break of continuity" in the future, however distant, and invites us (strange as it may appear) to look onward. All our purest affection, all our higher aspirations, all the deep longings of our heart, all the inner restlessness of what we feel to be our true self, all the forebodings and warnings of conscience, all lift our thoughts to "the land that is very far off," and to a LORD of endless life, and eternal light, and perfect love.

And these homes of ours, which bring us, or should have brought us, our best earthly peace and happiness, suggest to us, even in their incompleteness and because of it, that what awaits us in the "many mansions" of our FATHER is an everlasting home, where alone we can thoroughly realize what is faintly imaged here, foretasted a little here, proved here to *faith* only in His bestowal of "grace for grace"—the complete, personal, unspeakable gift, summed up in the words of GOD, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

Later, we will try, if we may do so without irreverence or presumption, to place ourselves at the gate of Heaven, that we may attend unto those

things which GOD has revealed unto us by His SPIRIT, concerning the glory and beauty of His kingdom, the worship and service of our King, the life and bliss of His saints.

But as for awhile we are still lingering here, still called to work our work on earth, still bidden to bear our cross, though ever onward and forward to the Holy Land, it may be well for us to think a little, ay, to think very deeply, even amid our practical labours and pressing trials, of the witness constantly allowed us, the anticipations daily given us, of that home beyond, which is our goal.

1. We are placed in a wonderful universe, much of which—most of which—is quite beyond and above us. Sometimes, surely, it is borne in upon us, that what we see now in a glass darkly we may see hereafter with open face; and that as we ourselves are part of the creation of GOD, we are attracted, as by a sort of spiritual gravitation, to all other parts thereof. It is a marvellous expression of the LORD'S goodness to men, as the very crown of His excellent work, that "He hath set the world in their heart,"[1] as if to tell us that He hath made all things for us, and that though they chiefly subserve His glory, they are meant to fill us with wonder and thankfulness and joy, and to lift us above a gross material life to some knowledge of all things visible and invisible, and (above all) of Him which in wisdom made them all.

[1] Eccles. iii. 11.

2. But we have also a little world of our own—a magic circle in which we have our proper place, our familiar associations. The home is that to which we can always resort, and with which our comfort and our gladness are inseparably bound up—so much so, that as years go by, our heart sinks at the prospect of the breaking up of the home. But these homes are changing: the inmates gradually disperse—one marries, another departs to a far country, another passes from the earth, and we see his face no more. And we learn, not sentimentally, but in all sober seriousness, the healthful lesson that our earthly homes are not meant to ensnare us or absorb all our interest and all our hope. The bright colours are saddened, the merry voices are stilled, the delightful companionship comes suddenly to an end, in order that we may be lifted Heavenward. For He who made us to be of one mind in a house here, desired to show us thereby what may be the harmony and love hereafter. May JESUS CHRIST be praised for the happy homes of our youth, and for the preparation which He thus made in our souls for the fulness of joy above!

3. And again, as those we love pass into the unseen world, as those we love in CHRIST depart to be with Him, "which is far better" than their continuing with us, the call is an unmistakable one—not to a morbid dislike to this life, or a morbid

shrinking from its duties, but to a remembrance of the rest of those whom we have loved and lost, and to an imitation of them in labouring to enter into that rest. The Paradise of GOD is ever increasing our store within its peaceful borders, ever loosening our hold on present things. We recollect, we commemorate, our departed Christian friends, saying to ourselves—

"Their home is reached, but mine must still be found."

And though our loving hearts ascend even higher than that, in our expectation of the final home (to which even Paradise is but the ante-chamber) yet the knowledge that they are at rest, and safe from defeat, and that the King Himself is ready to bring them to the glory of the everlasting, helps to set our faces homeward, our hearts heavenward.

"As one by one they enter in, and the stern portals close once more,
The halo seems to linger round those kneeling closest to the door;
The joy that lightened from that place, shines still upon the watcher's face."

4. But whence this glorious fellowship, this happy expectation? It springs from the growing knowledge of the LORD of Paradise, the King of heaven and earth, the risen and ascended SAVIOUR. He is parted from us, that we may never depart from Him; ascended out of our sight, so that in heart and mind we too may ascend, and continually dwell with Him.

"Chains of my heart, avaunt I say,
I will arise, and in the strength of love
Pursue the bright track ere it fade away,
My SAVIOUR'S pathway to His home above.

"Sure, when I reach the point where earth
Melts into nothing from the uncumbered sight,
Heaven will o'ercome the attraction of my birth,
And I shall sink in yonder sea of light." [1]

5. Such devout longings, such a purpose of living above the world, though in the world, speak of preparation. What a help to us, when thus minded, to watch the higher lives of others, as they may be found, in every grade and place, often among the very poor, sometimes among those whose riches might have been supposed to make them utterly worldly. What a comfort to discern these higher lives getting ready for the time of their departure. We see them, in the midst of health and work, cheerful among men, but intent on the Kingdom of GOD. We see them, towards the close, just as before, but able now, through the habit of a lifetime, to keep their heart where their treasure has been so long. When St. David, the great and holy king of the Scots, ending his devout and active life with the fervent and continuous recitation of the hundred and nineteenth and hundred and twentieth Psalms, was asked to pause a little, he answered, "Suffer me rather to meditate on heavenly things, that my

[1] The "Christian Year" (Ascension Day).

soul, now about to escape from its earthly prison, may return to its own home, refreshed with the *viaticum* of the Word of GOD."

Yes, it all points that way; we are reminded constantly of it; our fears, our struggles, our reluctances, are passing from us. The LORD is calling us; the saints are before us; the SPIRIT strives within us; the path is plain; the promise is sure; the day is drawing near.

"We are but strangers here,
Heaven is our Home;
Earth is a desert drear,
Heaven is our Home.
Danger and sorrow stand
Round us on every hand,
Heaven is our Fatherland,
Heaven is our Home.

"There at our SAVIOUR'S side,
Heaven is our Home,
May we be glorified,
Heaven is our Home.
There are the good and blest,
Those we love most and best;
Grant us with them to rest;
Heaven is our Home."

HEAVEN.

"Some seek a Heaven of rest,
And some an ampler sphere
For doing work they cannot do
While they are prisoned here.

"Some seek a Heaven of song,
And others fain would rise
From all articulate utterance
To silent ecstasies.

"Some seek a home in Heaven,
And some would pray to be
Alone with GOD, beyond the reach
Of other company.

"But in GOD'S perfect Heaven
All aspirations meet,
Each separate longing is fulfilled,
Each separate soul complete."

EDWIN HATCH.

XXXVII.

OUR FATHER'S HOME.

"Oh! bring us home at last,
Our FATHER! Bid our weary wanderings cease,
Uplift the veil o'ercast,
Between our spirits and the Home of peace."

ANON.

OUR SAVIOUR speaks to us of Heaven, as of the home He knows perfectly. He describes it as His FATHER'S house. He assures us that there are "many mansions" there, that in those mansions all of us can be received and blest, that we may be thoroughly comforted concerning our present ignorance of that glorious abode, because "if it were not so," if it were not our eternal home as well as His, He "would have told" us.

All this He tells us as little children, in simple speech, and under earthly figures such as we in our nonage can understand. Let us be ready, just because we have from Him so much instruction, so many studies that engross our attention, to learn of Him in a truly child-like spirit, and, in short,

to become, under His guidance and blessing, as little children, in order that we may enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

It may be objected that the consideration of Heaven is not a practical subject. But if *that* be not practical, nothing can be permanently so. For science shows us that the earth, with all things that are therein, shall either be burned up, or become uninhabitable by reason of the cooling of the central sun; and for us as individuals the horizon is bounded by a few brief years. Therefore the world in which we have to pass our short time, the life which we now live in the flesh, can be of no lasting practical interest for us, except on the supposition that we have here the foreshadowing of another world, the probation for another life. But as Christians, as disciples of the CHRIST, we feel that we are not left to mere reason and probability (though these too should guide us as rational beings); we feel that Heaven is of the most intense and joyful interest to us; that as this earth which has been given to the children of men is yet the footstool of the Great King, so the whole heavens are the LORD'S, and "the Heaven of Heavens" His dwelling-place to which He calls us, one and all. If Heaven is anything, it is the great reality. If there have been granted to us almost infinite capacities, we cannot imagine that these can find room for their proper exercise in three score years

and ten. If our life here is the truly godly, truly manly life, we feel sure that it is but the preparation for a higher existence. The manly life of service and patience and chivalry and self-control is qualifying us for "the full-grown energies of Heaven." The godly life of purity and penitence and prayer can but have reference to, can only be explained by, the joys of GOD, the praises of GOD, in heaven. We feel, moreover, that our LORD, who has perfect knowledge of both worlds,[1] and "all power" in both worlds,[2] connects the thought of His Kingdom with both worlds. He does not only say, "the Kingdom of GOD shall come," but also, "the Kingdom of GOD is among you." He speaks not only of "coming in His glory," but as being a King already come; He likens the Kingdom of Heaven, not only, as in a very solemn future day, to the net which shall gather of every kind, that there may be a separation, but also, as in this present time, to the sowing of tares among wheat, or the growth of a grain of mustard seed, or the secret, gradual influence of leaven.

So let us ever correct our crude ideas concerning Heaven, by His holy teaching, and strive, not merely, through His mercy, to attain Eternal life there, but also, through His grace, to gain here the mind and spirit of Heaven. Thus, in one sense,

[1] Proverbs viii. 14, 15, 22, 23, 27, 30.

[2] St. Matt. xxviii. 18.

Heaven will be about us, even from our infancy; and within us, as we reverence our King; and yet without us also, as the goal of all the saints; and above us, as the place where JESUS sitteth at the right hand of GOD.

If sometimes, in our purblind view, we cannot see how to reconcile these two conceptions, it will be our wisdom to accept them both, and to act upon both, and to make both the motive for our course, as it goes forward from the life which now is, to that which is to come.

Little by little the revelation will grow clearer to us, and we shall move on, as those who are in the light, and shall wait, in peace and hope, for the dawning of the Day, when "the LORD Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of GOD." May we not even have "boldness in the day of judgment," if our hearts are learning to be in harmony with Heaven, and we spend our lives in communion with its King?

In such a spirit, and in entire reliance upon Him, let us not be afraid to think and to speak of these things. But, O my soul, be very reverent, "for GOD is in Heaven, and thou upon earth."

I. If we would meditate aright on matters so stupendous yet so all-important, we must begin by reflecting what Heaven is not.

We do not mean, and (what is of infinitely higher

concern) our LORD does not mean, this planet on which we now are—not even (as some have imagined) this planet purged and refined, purged of its material dross and refined from the moral and spiritual evil which mars its beauty and its harmony. Apart from all other considerations, this world of ours is marked with the stamp of transitoriness. On its geology, on its tides, on its forms of life, on its temperature, on its beauty, even on its orbit and its mass, GOD has written the words in large characters, "A little while." And indeed the SPIRIT of GOD has told us plainly that the earth shall melt away at the showing of GOD'S voice—that "the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die as in like manner," while His "salvation shall be for ever," and, for our comfort, that we need "not fear, though the earth be removed."[1] The very glory of the earth (and surely it is full of loveliness and splendour, as the creation of GOD) may serve to suggest to us the glory which excelleth, the magnificence of our Eternal Home.

"O GOD, O good beyond compare,
If thus Thy meaner works are fair,
If thus Thy bounties gild the span
Of ruined earth and fallen man,
How glorious must the mansions be,
Where Thy redeemed shall dwell with Thee!"

[1] Isaiah li. 6; Psalm xlvi. 2, 6.

Nor, again, are the pleasures of the earth, the present delights of the sons of men, refracted in the celestial telescope. The happy hunting-fields of the savage, the sensual gratifications of Islam, the Elysium of the poets who knew not CHRIST, find no place in the boundless prospect of the fulness of our joy in the Presence of the LORD, or of the pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore. The Christian understands this even now. He knows quite well that here as there, here in the militant Church, there in the Church triumphant, "the Kingdom of GOD is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the HOLY GHOST."[1]

Nor are our thoughts of Heaven, His revelations of Heaven, limited to the starry height. True indeed that "the heavens," even thus understood, "are higher than the earth," almost, to our capacity, infinitely higher,[2] as GOD'S thoughts are higher than our thoughts. True, that it is quite possible that some of the heavenly bodies may be perfectly

[1] Rom. xiv. 17.

[2] One of the nearest of the fixed stars (61 Cygni) is forty billions of miles from the sun, and, though its velocity is thirty miles a second, it would take about 40,000 years to reach the sun. But if we think only of the planets, what an astounding fact it is that, whereas we on the earth are 92 millions of miles from the sun, we are separated from Jupiter by nearly 390 millions of miles, from Uranus by 1687 millions of miles, and from Neptune by 2687 millions of miles!

habitable for beings like ourselves, when we shall be "clothed upon" with an immortal substance, and removed entirely from the present conditions of life. But it is the Home of GOD which we are humbly thinking of, and to which (in His marvellous love) He is attracting us; and in thoughts of Him there is no higher and lower, no consideration of time or space, no question as to dwelling or environment. "Behold the Heaven and Heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee." And even from our human point of view, nothing shows the need of a spiritual understanding of the Home beyond more clearly than the contemplation of the glories of the firmament—the all but boundless expanse wherein are dimly discerned worlds beyond worlds. Nay, the cold light of the stars, their unchanging courses, their absolute and formal order, do not seem to us illustrations of the life, or the worship, or the service, of those who are made in the Image of GOD, and who rejoice before Him, and work unto Him, and bend their will to His, in the glorious liberty of His children. Once more, as far at least as our own solar system is concerned, it has not, any more than the earth, even that pledge of permanence which is essential to the idea of Heaven. Great as its glories are, they bear upon them the mark of origination in time, and the certainty of their ultimate dissolution. The planets are slowly losing heat, and the whole of them, with

the central sun, are, in the eyes of men of science, evidently moving off into space. Marvellous corroboration of the prophecy of CHRIST our LORD! Who would have thought, when CHRIST was on the earth, that, as He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away?" But it is so. "All are together bound on a stupendous voyage through the realms of space. . . . Every two days the solar system accomplishes a stage of about a million miles in its journey towards the constellation of Hercules."[1] All is safe in His hands who made it, and His redeemed shall dwell with Him in perfect peace, wherever their local habitation may be. But as "the heavens and the earth, which are now,[2] are kept in store by His word, reserved unto fire," we know that in these, so far as they are material, our eternal rest cannot be found. For us, His creatures, though deathless after death, He will provide some better thing, some fresh creation. *He* bids us expect this. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." And so "we, according to His promise, look for new

[1] Sir Robert Ball's "Story of the Heavens" p. 439.

[2] This seems to refer only to the solar system—to that system which was created chiefly for us men. That the fixed stars were made for a different purpose, may be inferred from the fact that no human eye, aided or unaided, has ever seen the actual nucleus of such a star.

heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."[1]

Is Paradise, then, the haven where we would be? Are people right, after all, in saying, as they constantly say of departed friends, that they are gone to Heaven? Surely there is a confusion of thought here. Surely it was after CHRIST'S Ascension that the Apostle spoke of Him as "gone into Heaven."[2] At death, even that sinless SAVIOUR passed into Paradise, not into Heaven itself, as we know from His own word, uttered after His Resurrection and before His Ascension, "I am not yet ascended to MY FATHER."[3]

Between our homes on earth, and our mansions in Heaven, there is that holy region of the blest, which combines the restfulness of the home and the sinlessness of Heaven, and yet neither fully completes the one, nor fully anticipates the other. Paradise is beautiful and blessed, the place of certain hope and happy peace; but it is not Heaven, even as the cemetery wherein our bodies sleep awhile is not Home. Nay more, it has been truly said, "Paradise is not our Home, any more than it is the Heaven for all the servants of our LORD. Not all the saints shall enter it. One happy generation shall be caught up at once to meet the LORD, and to be for ever with Him in glory."

[1] Isaiah lxv. 17; 2 St. Peter iii. 13. [2] 1 St. Peter iii. 22.
[3] S. John xx. 17. Compare ch. iii. 13.

No hymns, however soothing, however stirring, should make us forget this. "Abraham's bosom" is not "the Bosom of our GOD," nor is the joy and felicity of them that sleep in JESUS the perfect consummation and bliss which shall be theirs in the unveiled glory of His Presence, when they arise to serve Him. They wait in peace, but still they wait, for they without us shall not be made perfect.

II. What, then, is the Heaven we pray for, the Heaven in which our hearts may be, and our treasure also? We have not, of course, faculties for describing it. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which GOD hath prepared for them that love Him." But still, in some measure, "GOD hath revealed them unto us by His SPIRIT;" and indeed He *could* grant us a complete revelation thereof, "for the SPIRIT searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of GOD."[1] Only we must remember that the wisdom of GOD is spoken to us "in a mystery." We cannot thoroughly fathom its meaning. Were the mystery given in its entirety, we could not, with our present organs, our present understanding, fully grasp it. From its earliest germ to its thorough realization, it is all a matter of revelation. Isaiah prophesied through the SPIRIT of CHRIST which was in him. What Isaiah pro-

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

phesied through the SPIRIT, St. Paul through the SPIRIT understood. What the Apostle partially saw, the Church shall hereafter fully know. But it is all connected with CHRIST. He is Himself the Mystery of Godliness. He is the Wisdom of GOD. He is the Portion of His Saints. He is our Hope, our Peace, and our Joy. Eternal Life is the very central idea of Heaven. And this the SPIRIT begins to impart to us already in the self-manifestation of the SON. The SON speaketh to the FATHER, "This is Life Eternal, that they might know Thee the Only True GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom Thou hast sent."

We think of the mission of the Incarnate SON; of His teaching and His working upon earth; of His atoning death, His rising again, His ascension to the glory which He had with the FATHER before the world was; and the HOLY SPIRIT gives us a knowledge of all this—a knowledge sufficient to sanctify our lives, and to make us labour to enter into His rest, and to encourage us to worship Him here and hereafter. And then our thoughts of Heaven grow less vague, and take this definite shape.

1. Heaven is a state; or (to speak more accurately) three states, two imperfect, one perfect.[1] The first is realized in the Church on earth, for this is the Kingdom of Heaven, as we learn from

[1] See Canon Luckock on "The Intermediate State."

many parables, and comprehend from many blessings, one of the greatest being faith in the unseen CHRIST, as the Head of the Body, the King of Glory, opening Heaven to us in the Holy Eucharist, and giving us "angels' food" therein. The second is realized in Paradise, where the faithful enter into rest, and are, in some true sense, with CHRIST the Shepherd and the King. The third is realized in the place of perfection—that "New Jerusalem" which lieth foursquare, having the Glory of GOD, and CHRIST the Lamb as its Light and its Life. But all is one vast temple, the temple of holiness, rest, and worship.

2. But as earth is a real place, and Paradise real also, so too is highest Heaven. Even if GOD condescends to our human ignorance, our human experience, in telling us about His everlasting Home, He does at least assure us that it is not *only* a state. The mention of the Throne of His Glory, the presence of the ministering spirits round about Him, the ascension of the human nature, the crucified and risen body of the LORD, all nations gathered before Him, the great voice of much people in Heaven, the river of living water, and the tree of life, and the obedient entering in through the gates into the City—these secrets thus revealed and belonging to us, tell us of the happy place, our FATHER'S House on high, the real Home of our personal souls.

3. We seem at times far from that Heavenly Home, and forget that we must love GOD more on earth, if we would be with Him in Heaven. We have not exact knowledge of Heaven, but we do know GOD'S will on earth, and have grace to fulfil it. As our grandest English epic says,

> "Heaven is for thee too high
> To know what passes there: be lowly wise,
> Think only what concerns thee and thy being."

Let us remember that He who has all power in Heaven, has all power also on earth. Wonderful to say, though He sitteth at the right hand of the FATHER, He is also with us all the days even unto the end of the world. Our homes are cheered by His SPIRIT. His house is the "Heaven open" to us continually. Through Him, by the SPIRIT, we have access unto the FATHER, and fear gives place to confidence, as we recollect that He who "dwells in the high and holy place" dwells also "with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit."

> "With awe-struck souls we seek Thee, we adore
> Thy greatness ever more and more.
> We turn to Thee with worship, till at last,
> Our journey well nigh past,
> When now our day of life draws to its end,
> Looking with less of awe and more of love
> To Thy high throne above,
> We see no dazzling brightness as of old,
> No kingly splendour cold,
> But the sweet Presence of a Heavenly Friend."

XXXVIII.

THE FAMILIAR PLACE.

"I was no stranger in a strange land there;
But rather as one who, travel-worn and weary—
Weary of wandering through many climes—
At length, returning homeward, eyes far off
The white cliffs of his fatherland."

BISHOP BICKERSTETH.

IT is, of course, most true that, as death is the "unknown bourne from which no traveller returns," so the state which succeeds to the judgment after death, and the heavenly abode where we, if faithful, shall ever be with the LORD, seem practically unexplored. But Christians live not only by hope, but by faith. They not only wait for that they see not, but also walk already in Emmanuel's land. Their hearts are attuned to some at least of its music. Its paths are recognized by them as the ways of the LORD. It is not as strangers that they view the new Jerusalem; they discern in it, afar off, the city of their solemnities, the joy and comfort which upheld them here, the land of their

second birth. Heaven, indeed, is their home; but earth is redolent of Heaven; and when at length the everlasting doors are lifted up, they find themselves in Fatherland, and the habits which they formed in the Church below are, many of them, those which they need, those which bring them blessing, in the courts above, where JESUS is ready to welcome His own.

Let me consider with myself, and with all who love Him in sincerity, some thoughts, some truths, about that unknown well-known home, that place which is growing more precious to us the more the familiar ties strengthen with time and bear the strain of connection with the eternal shore.

1. It is the home of our FATHER, the home wherein He lives and loves, the home whence He beholds with tender compassion the children of men, the home wherein is set the throne of the heavenly grace. What volumes of meaning open out to me as day by day, with every faithful member of the Church throughout the world, I begin my prayer to Him! "Our FATHER, which art in Heaven." It is like the beginning of that new song which shall never cease; the unveiling of that Face which shines perpetually upon the redeemed; the foretaste, continually renewed, of the joys which are at GOD'S right hand for evermore. The little child and the old man, the pure heart and the penitent, the strong life and the weak and suffering one,

the rich who is bending low to enter the humble door of the kingdom and the poor who hath great riches in GOD and true poverty in spirit—each and all are lifted by the opening of the LORD'S Prayer into the celestial land which they long for. And if they will but devoutly pray the few words which follow, the very fashion of their countenance is altered, for they have been awhile on that "Mount Zion, which may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever."

Our FATHER which art in the Heavens, this holy confidence of ours that calls Thee so takes us into Thy actual presence, shows us that Thou art Almighty in Thy help; that, though Thou dwellest on high, Thou art not far from any one of us; that Thine is a perfect love, faintly imaged in our love for our children.

2. And so that region of light and awe is yet the region with which our prayers and praises have to do. Ever since our baptism admitted us into the kingdom of Heaven on earth, ever since we learnt that that kingdom is around us, and not only above us, we have been encouraged and constrained to pray. For prayer is the true language of Heaven; and when we speak to GOD hereafter it will not be in a strange tongue or with the fear of strangers, but from the heart and lips of sons and daughters who have known and loved Him here. And our praises too, though as yet most unworthy of His

glory, are, after all, real lessons, and loving lessons too, in the adoration which, beginning at His footstool, lifts us at last to His throne. The many members of His Church in these present Eucharists raise the same thanksgivings, the same bright songs of joy which the unseen hosts are always offering to Him, and which may be our eternal oblation, still with theirs, in the courts above. "With angels, and archangels, and all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name, evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory."

"Wake and lift up thyself, my heart,
And with the angels bear thy part,"

and these high praises which express so much for thee already shall prepare thee for the harmonies of Heaven, no strange land, no unfamiliar strains.

3. But, again, let me remember that Heaven is the realm which sets the rule for our life, the standard of our obedience and our submission. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven." This is a prayer which accustoms us to the laws, the discipline, the resignation, the loving, holy life of a higher world. Seeing, as we do on every side of us, waywardness and rebellion and reluctance to obey; feeling, as we do, each day of our lives another law in our members, a preference for our own pleasure, the persistent love of self—the de-

votions of each morning and each evening (which few of us habitually neglect), recall us continually to the thought of that better country where all are bent with delight on the doing of GOD'S will, and the accomplishment of GOD'S work. Gradually the living man begins to live for the unseen, and "carries into it something not wholly unacceptable."[1] Such a life, resting on reason as well as on faith, tends at least towards the life of perfection. It keeps before it a high ideal, believing that such an ideal is actually realized elsewhere; and is quickened practically in labouring and in enduring for GOD and man, by the reflection that what is possible and joyful for other spiritual beings is possible and joyful also for us. And ONE has shown us that the life of Heaven may also be, so far as obedience is concerned, man's life on earth. The Incarnate SON, who gave us a prayer to familiarize us with the ways of Heaven, gave us also an example to encourage and empower us to walk therein. He has not forgotten that we are men, not angels; but He would have us also recollect that He took not on Him the nature of angels, but our human nature, that in it He might do GOD'S will, and enable us to do it. Thus "Heaven and earth, through the spotless Birth" and the wondrous Life, are shown to be as one vast field for the service of the LORD.

[1] "The Unseen Universe," p. 192.

4. But more than this, Heaven is also the treasure-house of our affections. CHRIST, after commending to us, by His lips and in His life, the duty and blessing of the highest obedience; after being Himself obedient unto death, even the death of the cross—rose again from the earth, and ascended into Heaven, that we might in heart and mind thither ascend and with Him continually dwell. There, He is only far above our earthly sight. Spiritually, He is very near us; and He hath raised us up together with Him, and made us sit together with Him in heavenly places. No earthly glasses can discover Him, but faith is the telescope of the soul, and love follows Him up to the glory of light, and, like the happy astronomer who marks the distance of the star in theory, and makes it so near to himself in fact, rejoices to live and speak and work for Him who is above the heavens.[1]

As "in our eyes the solar system," with all its vastness, "has the interest and the familiarity of home,"[2] so may all of us who come under the spiritual influence of "the Sun of righteousness," take delight in the assurance that He is really with

[1] Many clergymen are members of the Royal Astronomical Society. Two of these, as the writer happens to know, have come out of the observatory at night, most thankful that they *were* clergymen, allowed to tell out to others the wonders of the LORD.

[2] "The Story of the Heavens" (Sir Robert Ball).

us, and that because He is unseen He helps us to sustain that life for the unseen, which has been pronounced the only perfect life. He is the Centre to us. He is our Life, "whom, having not seen, we love, in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Ay, because of Him "our conversation is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the SAVIOUR, the LORD JESUS CHRIST."

5. Once more, Heaven wears a familiar aspect to us, because it is the city to which we are going up in the name of the LORD, the city into which we have, for CHRIST'S sake, the right to enter.[1] "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of Heaven to all believers." All our life long He is calling us up thither. All troubles and trials and temptations are meant to draw us to belief in Him, to blessedness through Him. Earth's many voices are the echoes of the one great voice of GOD, His voice in nature and in grace, bidding us come home and be at rest. Here, in this world, "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." But then this very want of satisfaction, this very lack of completeness, should testify to us concerning that kingdom which faith makes known to us already, and of which we pray that we may not be disappointed of our hope. O that our hearts may

[1] Rev. xxii. 14.

surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found! Faith tells us, tells us all the more clearly when fulness of pleasure fails us here, that there the first sight of the Face of the LORD, the first sound of His glorious voice, will for ever satisfy the eye, for ever fill the ear of the redeemed.

Arise, let us be going towards that city of eternal gladness, ever bearing in mind the warning of Him who loved us, and who waits to welcome us in the home that is indeed our own:—"Not every one that saith unto Me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My FATHER which is in Heaven."

XXXIX.

THE CHURCH ON EARTH FULFILLED IN HEAVEN.

"Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, City of our GOD;
He, whose word cannot be broken,
Formed thee for His own abode."

REV. J. NEWTON.

WE think of Heaven, not only as the place familiar to us through our daily prayer and oft-repeated creed, but as the blessed realm of which our LORD the King was constantly testifying as His well-known home from everlasting.

The holy Gospels, though giving us only a little portion of His teaching in this world, still show us very plainly this—that He was always instructing men concerning the Kingdom of Heaven, constantly warning them as to what the loss of it would be, drawing them in various ways to value, and to seek, and to strive after, its manifold blessings, and ever reminding them of the vast difference between the world which now is and the world which is to come, between each passing perishing age, and the

consummation of all the ages, when time shall be no longer.

And so, if we study the words of CHRIST, we shall find not a little instruction in that which is to us so momentous—not indeed so much as to divert us from our present duties and present blessings, but yet enough to show us, as we go forward in this life, the paramount importance of the life beyond the grave. He loves to see us caring for that life, preparing for that Home; and of us also it may be recorded, as it is of those who sought His guidance in the Holy Land, "He welcomed them, and spake to them of the Kingdom of GOD."

And there is one point which stands out very prominently in this teaching of His—the twofold truth, so constantly on His lips, that the Kingdom of Heaven is among us here, and yet is to be revealed hereafter.

If, on the one hand, He is ever pointing by all sorts of similitudes to that Church on earth which is His Kingdom; on the other hand we find Him constantly raising our thoughts on high above the world—to Heaven, as His FATHER'S Throne; to the nature of rewards in that Kingdom; to the character of those who shall enter therein, the poor in spirit, the persecuted, the pure in heart, the loving, the children and the child-like.

And as we study His words, and realize that He is Himself within the mysteries of His Kingdom,

and tells us of that which He sees and knows, both here below and there above, it is borne in upon us that, though our Home is in a better land,

"Yet this is City of God, both then and now,"

and that the Church in its grace here is only to be developed into the Church in its glory there.

Let us meditate on this, not merely as a study, but with a view to practice, not, for an instant, to make visionary the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, but so as to understand that the Lord loveth even the gates of Zion in this world, and is preparing us for the joys of our Eternal Home by the joys of our Spiritual Home.

For, first, we must never forget that this Home of ours, the Church of the living God, was founded not in Heaven but on the earth. "Her foundations are on the holy hills," but they are the hills of this present world touched by the light of God, Apostles and Prophets in our human nature, moved by the Holy Ghost. As one of the ancient hymns reminds us—

"These, the temple's sure foundations,
These are they that bind the nations
Into God's great Home above;
These the city's pearly portal,
Knitting faith with work immortal,
Jew and Gentile into love."

Again, it is for our defence and refuge here, for

our redemption and our sanctification now, that the Church was set up on the earth. But it groweth ever unto a holy temple in the LORD. Its living stones, its polished corners, its walls resonant with salvation, are not for man only, but for the LORD GOD. Its crown and glory are in Him, whose Kingdom is not of this world, and cannot in this finite world find true completion.

And again, it is His purpose to bring the members of His Body, the children of His Kingdom, who have had the fellowship of His sufferings here, to share His exaltation there. It was His own priestly prayer, "I will that where I am, they also may be with Me, that they may behold My glory, the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

Then, too, all He has given us in His Church below, is suggestive of, and preparatory to, the never-failing joys which He has promised us in His Church above. We compare the Gospel with the Revelation, our life in the Church now with the life which we hope for then, and we see the one witnessing to the other, attracting us to the other, giving us joy and peace through the other. Here is the Water of Baptism, touched and sanctified by the HOLY SPIRIT; there the River of the Water of Life, making glad, by the same SPIRIT, the City of GOD. Here we kneel as penitents under the Cross of CHRIST, that wherein we glory, the symbol of our salvation, the shelter

for all the Church; there, we stand in joyful boldness beside the Tree of Life, itself the glory of the Cross, the eternal pledge and proof of salvation won for all the nations of the earth, in the Church throughout all the world. Here are the voices of prayer, and the voices of praise are there. Here is the word of the LORD, and there He communeth with us for ever. Here is the most blessed Eucharist, the Bread which came down from Heaven, the chalice of the precious Blood of GOD; but there we sit down as those who are called on high to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and behold Him, no longer under vails and forms, but eye to eye even "as He is."

And yet again, life ever reviving in the Church, life sometimes re-orient from the very dust of a death in trespasses and sins, finds its fulfilment in and after the Resurrection, in the happy Church of the firstborn that are written in Heaven, and that shall never die. Even here they rose in the risen LORD, and in the ascended LORD they too ascended, for their union with Him in the Church which is His Body was quite real, and their "life was hid with CHRIST in GOD." But there, their rising, their regeneration, their restoration to life, their spiritual preservation which has had no death, shall be made manifest; and the very redemption of their bodies, which, on earth, even in the Church, they could only wait for, shall be actual and complete, since these

too shall "be fashioned like unto CHRIST'S glorious Body, according to the mighty working whereby He shall subdue all things unto Himself."

In CHRIST the Church—in CHRIST each Christian, shall abide the same, though changed; the life here one with the life there; the eternal Spouse above, the "wife who has made herself ready" below. What a waiting, but what a coronation for it all!

"We long to hear Thy voice,
To see Thee face to face,
To share Thy crown and glory there,
As now we share Thy grace.
Should not the loving Bride
The absent Bridegroom mourn?
Should she not wear the weeds of grief
Until her LORD return?
Come, then, LORD JESU, come."

He is with her, yet she expects Him. He is with us all the days, even unto the end of the world; but yet we look for Him. The Church has His Presence, and still is listening for His voice. He knoweth His own even now, but He will mould her yet more to His likeness.

As the Transfiguration, on the Holy Mount, during the days of His humiliation, showed us what the LORD of glory is in His holy Heaven, so the Church, which is His, shining before Him already in the beauty of holiness, is the same which He will

hereafter "present unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish,"

"And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest."

XL.

THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN.

"We bear a world about us—aye on wing,
And with us, and to which this skyroof'd cell,
This strange material ball, is but a thing
Of walking shadows; with us doth it dwell
The undying spirit's world invisible."

WILLIAMS.

THE writer of the earliest book ever written bursts forth, as he thinks of GOD and of GOD'S abode, into the earnest cry of spiritual desire, "Oh! that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat!" And still, as in the days of the patriarch, men are searching for GOD, and longing to know the place of His glorious Presence —that Presence which is the chief joy of Heaven, and the greatest blessing for those who as yet dwell upon the earth. Still must this be their experience, "Behold! I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that

I cannot see Him." And still, as they keep His way and hold fast the commandments of His lips, they learn the blessing of having to walk by faith and not by sight, and are content to believe that GOD, who is everywhere present, will reveal Himself to them in His own good time, and make them partakers of His everlasting Kingdom.

> "Now in the meanwhile, with hearts raised on high,
> We for that Kingdom must yearn and must sigh,
> Seeking Jerusalem, dear native land,
> Through our long exile on Babylon's strand."

But we may be helped in our patience of hope, and our work of faith, by reflecting that the invisible blends wonderfully with the visible, that the visible is at once the veil and the revelation of the invisible, and that the spiritual world, of which GOD is of course the centre, not only encompasses but also permeates that which is natural—that of which GOD is the Creator, as He is of the spiritual.

The seen and the unseen are marvellously mingled. The field of science, no less than the field of faith, seems to show that this is so. And though we must not expect to find proof in such analogies; yet they do supply us with illustrations of our creed, and encouragements for our hope.

Scientific men, for instance, speak of light, and heat, and energy, and electricity, as things which cannot be weighed. Do they not really mean that

these are invisible powers, passing from one visible substance to another, and known only by their effects?

Again, as Dr. Young suggests in his *Natural Philosophy*, thousands of spiritual worlds may exist unseen for ever by human eyes, and even the presence of matter, in a given spot, need not necessarily exclude these existences from it. Of these independent worlds, some may be "existing in different parts of space, others pervading each other unseen and unknown, in the same space, others again, to which space may not be a necessary mode of existence."

Again, the thought of man results from the shifting of particles in the brain, yet it is not a blind brute impulse, but moulded and guided by that unseen and immaterial will of ours, which may indeed draw us to evil, but is free to lift us to what is holy and good.

And when we turn from the speculations of science to the probabilities of faith, or (as we should say) to the visions and revelations of the LORD, how completely joined and yet distinct are the seen and the unseen!

We watch the human body, and understand that it is the earthen vessel of the soul. We feel the workings of our conscience, acting through memory, itself partly a faculty of matter; but we realize therein something quite immaterial also, having within it an awful forecast of the future, a witnes

to the coming judgment of GOD. We receive the consecrated elements in the Holy Communion, and know, that under the forms of bread and wine, we are brought nigh to a Spiritual Presence, and are really partakers of CHRIST.

Such things remind us that we are very near to Heaven and heavenly powers, that the unseen world is (so to say) interwoven with this present world of ours, and that, if our eyes were opened, as they might be, we should discern already some of the mysteries of the Kingdom of GOD. From time to time the veil is lifted, and we behold, though still by faith or by Divine manifestation, the glories or the wonders of the spiritual. Elisha surrounded by an army at Dothan, but yet assured of horses and chariots of fire round about him for defence; Balaam in the narrow passage, compelled at last to see the angel of the LORD; Manoah, offering his sacrifice, and astounded by the sight of GOD in the fire; Mary Magdalene at the holy sepulchre; St. Peter in the prison; St. John in the SPIRIT on the LORD'S Day; Daniel and Ezekiel and Isaiah, suddenly made aware of the nearness of the LORD—such as these are the examples which Holy Scripture sets before us, to admonish us and comfort us concerning what goes on constantly in our own lives, and to prepare us for that day when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face, and be for ever with the LORD.

It were a miserable thing to be always taken up with the mere shell and outside of GOD'S world; to give our whole attention to the things which are about us, and which can be seen even by the beasts that perish; and to pass by all the intimations of our own spiritual nature and of GOD'S care for it, which are granted us in various ways. Sometimes it is the word of a great writer, sometimes the example of a saintly life, sometimes the simple prayer of a little child, sometimes the call of a suddenly-severed friendship, sometimes the strange personal appeal of a passage from the Bible, sometimes the still, small voice of GOD in our inmost heart—which reminds us that we are members, even here, of an unseen world.

How solemnly then it is borne in upon us, that "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal"!

Let us reverently ask whether it was not in part to teach us this, that "the Life was manifested" for us—that, without leaving the world, or our work in it, or our work for it, we might live above it, live the life unseen of men, life in the risen and ascended SAVIOUR—that we might believe in JESUS as "the Image of the invisible GOD," and see more and more of "the glory of GOD in the Face of JESUS CHRIST."

In Him verily Heaven is antedated. He by whom, as the WORD of GOD, all things were created

both in Heaven and earth, visible or invisible, can make the unseen world the great reality to us, can "make all things new" to our faith, as we move among the things which are seen.

> "In Thee I find a nobler birth,
> A glory o'er the world I see,
> And Paradise returns to earth,
> And blooms again for us in Thee.
> Thou openest Heaven once more to men,
> The soul's true Home, Thy Kingdom, LORD."

It is indeed this we still wait for—the full consummation, the glorious manifestation of the sons of GOD; but we are already inheritors, already "translated into the Kingdom of His dear SON." The record has stood the test for nineteen centuries: the invisible has witnessed to men behind the visible through every kind of change; the word is still most sure, able to cheer the dying, to comfort the penitent, to create the very beginnings of saintdom, and to finish it perfectly to the end. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His SON."

Here is the promise of Heaven, and the possession of Heaven, and the path to Heaven. Herein we are assured of the pardon of GOD, and the peace of GOD, and the Presence of GOD. It is all so near to us, so bright for us. There is but a thin veil, but a little cloud. Is it much to ask that we should wait awhile for the removal of these, and set ourselves a few years, perhaps a few days, longer, to the labours of that faith "which worketh by love," and to the patient waiting for CHRIST?

XLI.

THE SAVIOUR ON HIGH.

"Praise the LORD, ye everlasting choir, in holy songs of joy. Worlds unborn shall sing His glory, the exalted SON of GOD."

BEETHOVEN.

A CHILD beheld above him one of those wonderful glories of the sky—the parting hither and thither of the radiant clouds, and the mystery of the light beyond—and said that now he understood the words of the Psalmist (telling us how JESUS should ascend), "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in."

We smile, it may be, at such simplicity, that he should think the far-distant Heaven could be unfolded close to the earth. But, after all, it was but a picture parable; an earthly vision with a heavenly meaning in it. And how are we, with our purblind sight, more able than the pure-eyed child, the child who had been taught the things of GOD in suffering and loneliness, to explain to others, or to pourtray to ourselves, the marvel of the ascension of

our LORD? To us, as to His first disciples, the "cloud" which "received Him out of their sight" is surely the close of His earthly appearances, the beginning of His re-entry upon the glory which He had with the FATHER before the world was. In some ways it is even a help that it is so. It enables us a little to realize the blessed twofold truth, that He has indeed ascended up on high, and yet is with us all the days, even unto the end of the world.

This is a comfort which we need never lose hold of, even when, day by day, we adore and worship Him upon the Throne. He, in His real presence, He by His ever-abiding SPIRIT, is as truly with us, as the sun which He has made is with us in his rays of heat and light, though remaining millions of miles away from us. Nay, this is but a feeble illustration of the Divine verity that the glorified SON of GOD does come to us. For, when He ascended up on high, it was "that He might fill all things," and never leave us comfortless.

But we are thinking specially now of the exaltation of His manhood into Heaven, of His having truly entered into His glory. How He went up we can no more tell than the children. Happy for us, if in this, as in all the things which have been revealed, we have the faith and the teachableness of children, for "of such is the kingdom of Heaven." The proper citizens of Heaven understand its mysteries the best, and are best able in heart and mind

to ascend to the ascended SAVIOUR, and with Him continually to dwell.

But though in our faith we are to be as the children, in understanding we ought to be men. We need not shrink from the stupendous wonders of astronomy, because these seem at first to make the ascension of our LORD more difficult of comprehension. When we consider GOD'S heavens, even the works of His fingers, the moon and the stars which He has ordained; when we feel how utterly insignificant we are in comparison, and yet how He gives even us wisdom and knowledge and joy in the study of the celestial bodies; when we believe that He is as glorious in His word as in His worlds, and that His mercy is infinitely greater than the heavens,—we shall ever act upon the Psalmist's call, "O let your songs be of Him, and praise Him: and let your talking be all of His wondrous works."

And then true science will, not indeed make plain, but at least interpret to us the difficulties which science, falsely so called, puts in our way. True science will go with the right faith as a handmaid, yes, as a companion. If faith teaches us to believe that JESUS "ascended up far above all Heavens," science speaks to us of the awful velocity of light, and reminds us that the Maker of light, the One who created "the energy of the universe," is not bound by the speed of created things. If, as followers of faith, we learn that the body of the

LORD is passed into the heavens, we see, as followers of science, that vast distances are made as nothing even to *our* eyes and minds, and cannot baffle Him who is more than man. If, in our faith, we feel assured that His body, being spiritual, was governed by the laws of the Spirit, and not by the laws of matter; if, believing in the Resurrection, we acknowledge that He had already, by rising, burst asunder the bonds of matter, and could not be holden by them from His heavenly Home—we also seem to gather, from the principles of science, that the forces of the invisible are infinitely superior to those of the visible.

But even if we are reckoned, and justly reckon ourselves, as mere tyros in science—even if we seem to lose ourselves in the mazes of science, where the wise and the holy go forward hopefully hand in hand—yet as Christians we are not ashamed to say, We do not know, we cannot know, the full truth about the ascension of the CHRIST, but we believe it. Knowledge is of things we see, and we see but little either of things in earth, or things in Heaven. But "the evidence of things not seen" comes to us in divers ways and through the whole course of our lives. The Word of GOD, and the Church of GOD, and the saints of GOD, and the wonders wrought, apparently by the SPIRIT of GOD, in the conviction and conversion and consolation of repentant sinners, are witnesses constantly vouching for the truth of

GOD'S SON having been exalted with great triumph unto His kingdom in Heaven.

Oh, that we might be content to rest on this evidence, remembering that in this case we could not have had the testimony of eye-witnesses! Even the disciples who saw Him leave the earth, beheld only the act, not the effect. They saw Him go; they saw Him not (not at least with their bodily eyes) at the right hand of GOD. Angels declared to them that He had been taken from them into Heaven. And the HOLY SPIRIT told them, ten days afterwards, that the Christ was now by the right hand of GOD exalted. And they received the witness, which was confirmed by signs following; and the whole Church throughout the world has held ever since that in Him "we have a High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens."[1]

This, too, though our sins often overcloud it, is *our* faith. This is the hope which, even in our dullest, saddest days, we have not altogether let go; and "which hope" (we often feel) "we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even JESUS, made a High Priest for ever."[2]

What comfort have we here, what practical strength for our Christian life, what a call to go

[1] Acts i. 11; ii. 33; Heb. viii. 1. [2] Heb. vi. 19, 20.

onward and upward! Let me think of these a little.

1. JESUS is there: so Heaven is quite a human place, a place for us, though, apart from Him, ineffably Divine. How simple, yet how true, is the saying, that "if we think of Him, His Human Form comes before our eyes"! The glory of GOD is exceedingly great, and so is the glory of His SON; but yet He is "the Son of Man" as well, and His eyes are those eyes which looked with compassion on the multitudes on earth, and with love on the one devoted follower; and His hands the very same which took up the little child, and led the blind man, and blest all the disciples. Oh, what a joy to see "this same JESUS;" to see Him, and to part from Him no more!

2. JESUS is in Heaven: so Heaven is the Home for penitents, for there is the SAVIOUR of all sinners who truly repent. When we sorrow faithfully for sin, we think of Him as the same JESUS which was crucified, and which "ever liveth to make intercession for us." If "there is joy in the presence of the angels of GOD over one sinner that repenteth," how great must be the joy of the LORD Himself—the joy for which He endured the Cross, and despised the shame.

"Weary of earth, and laden with my sin,
I look at Heaven, and long to enter in;
But there no evil thing may find a home,
And yet I hear a voice that bids me, 'Come.'

"It is the voice of JESUS that I hear,
His are the hands stretch'd out to draw me near,
And His the Blood that can for all atone,
And set me faultless there before the Throne."

3. As JESUS is there, Heaven will be the consummation of the deepest, truest, fullest gladness we have ever had in His Church below. Who that has offered the Holy Eucharist with a humble, contrite, thankful heart, has not experienced a peace and bliss beyond all words? Who has not learned before the altar to rejoice unspeakably in Him who sitteth at the right hand of the FATHER, and taketh away the sins of the world; in Him who alone is Holy, alone our LORD, our one never-failing Advocate, our Life and Peace and Strength, our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption? What will it be to behold Him!

"O joy all joys beyond,
To see the LAMB who died,
And count each sacred wound
In hands, and feet, and side;
To give to Him the praise
Of every triumph won,
And sing through endless days
The great things He hath done."

4. JESUS is in Heaven; and so Heaven is the scene even of our present citizenship. The Head of the Body is there, and we the members are not separated from Him. GOD'S own love assures us of this. "He hath raised us up together, and made

us sit together in heavenly places in CHRIST JESUS." Yes, we are in Him and with Him; and so, because of Him, Heaven is the place of our affections, the place where our hearts are fixed, and where, if we will but be true to Him as He is true to us, we shall ever be with the LORD. It is His own precious promise. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be."

XLII.

THE COMFORT AND GLORY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"Search for us the depths of GOD,
Upward by the starry road,
Bear us to the high abode,
Comforter Divine!"

RAWSON.

WE think of the Person of the ascended SAVIOUR, as making Heaven a blessed home to us, as rendering it attractive rather than awful, as implying rest for us as well as reverence from us.

But we must not forget, as our own hearts enter Heaven, that "other COMFORTER" who is there, the Third Person of the TRINITY, the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, ever working for us men below, but above receiving always all honour and glory with the FATHER and the SON, world without end.

Practically, we do often forget Him, both there and here. It is sadly true, that "He, of all the Three Sacred Persons, is often the least known, the least loved, and the least worshipped."[1]

[1] "The Person and Work of the HOLY GHOST," by Rev. W. H. Hutchings, to whom the writer desires to express his deep obligations.

How wonderful a part we thereby miss of the Divine harmonies of Heaven—of the Divine consolations which draw us Heavenward! How far short we fall of the reasonable and necessary duty of praising GOD, and of seeking to please Him by means of His own help!

1. First, if we remember that the very name and joy of Heaven depend entirely on the Being and Nature of GOD, how all-important it is to think of GOD aright, to have the right faith concerning Him, the right faith in Him! The very idea of Heaven is marred by the cold conception of One Person only being GOD. It is, of course, quite true that we cannot understand a plurality of Persons in the Godhead; but that is because we have finite minds, and the mystery of the HOLY TRINITY is infinite. Yet it is also true that we cannot understand the Nature of GOD as revealed to us—that is, how "GOD is LOVE"—without believing in more than one Person as sharing that most precious attribute. Love, in Heaven as on earth, needs an object. And we can think of the Three Persons of the Blessed TRINITY as dwelling, from all eternity, in co-equal love. Of GOD the HOLY GHOST, indeed, Love seems, personally, a Name, as the WORD or Wisdom is of GOD the SON. The gift of the SPIRIT is really the SPIRIT Himself, and the very first of His gifts, the very chief of His fruit, is love. This concerns His work, His attitude (if we may reverently say so)

towards man; but we are taught to consider it also as His leading characteristic in the Godhead. He is the bond of union in the HOLY TRINITY, the unity of the Divine life—the One through whom the FATHER loveth the SON, and the SON the FATHER.

Thus the thought of the HOLY SPIRIT is at the very centre of that thought of GOD, which is necessary to the existence of Heaven.

2. But we are to think of Him, not merely as an influence from GOD, not merely as a power sent out by GOD, not merely as a spiritual link between two Divine Persons. No verily; He is a Person Himself. We must be on our guard against the habit so prevalent in the world, even in part of the so-called religious world, of explaining away these great truths. Church history proves that "Personality is one of the watchwords of the Catholic Faith." Men begin by arguing that there is no evil spirit; then they go on to fancy that there is no HOLY SPIRIT; then they end in denying even the Being of GOD Himself. But the Bible and the Church give no uncertain sound on these great verities. They point again and again to a real enemy of GOD and man, tempting, watching, seeking to be worshipped, seeking to devour. They point, as to a real SAVIOUR, Divine and human, so to a real COMFORTER, teaching, testifying, hearing, and speaking, One who can be grieved, who can intercede, who can

convince and convict—One who is sent by the FATHER, and glorifies the SON.

3. And this Blessed SPIRIT is with the FATHER and the SON. He is not only, as a SPIRIT, present on earth with those who seek His help, present to reprove those who reject it—but also, as a Person, present in Heaven, as truly as the First Person, and the Second, are present. He, with Them, greets the Church. "Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from JESUS CHRIST, who is the Faithful Witness."[1] Here, between the blessing from the Eternal FATHER and the blessing from the Everlasting SON, comes the blessing, given in exactly the same way and with the same words, from the seven Spirits—not surely, from seven angels or created spirits, for it were strange indeed to find these mentioned in the same breath with GOD—but rather from that One HOLY SPIRIT, who doth His sevenfold gifts impart—"diversities of gifts," all bestowed by, all summed up in, "the same SPIRIT." It is much as in the sayings of the prophet Zechariah. He saw, in the visions of GOD, seven lamps upon the golden candlestick, and heard that these were as "the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth," and learnt even thus early the mystery of the HOLY GHOST explained

[1] Rev. i. 4.

by the Word of the LORD, saying, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My SPIRIT, saith the LORD of Hosts."[1]

Yes, He is there, filling Heaven with love and joy. In one sense, indeed, He has descended upon the Church, but yet, as GOD, He abides on high. It was so with the SON of GOD, who came down from Heaven to be born, and to teach, and suffer, and die, and rise again, and yet could speak of Himself all the while as "in Heaven."[2] And thus for our comfort the LORD the SPIRIT abides with us for ever in the Church on earth, and yet for our worship abides continually on high with JESUS, in the glory of GOD the FATHER.

4. Let us, daily, lift up our hearts to Him there. Though He is one with the FATHER and the SON, and though, in approaching the Sacred TRINITY, we really approach Each Person, yet we can at least contemplate Each singly. As the blessing of Each can be distinguished, the "Grace" of the SON from "the Love" of the FATHER, and the "Love" of the FATHER from "the Fellowship" of the HOLY GHOST, so we can also glorify Each distinctively. It will help us very much if we thus glorify and adore the Gracious SPIRIT as our Personal Comforter and Friend. As children of men, it is true, we cannot expect to realize Him to ourselves, as we can in some degree realize to ourselves the SON, as our

[1] Zech. iv. 2, 6, 10. [2] St. John iii. 13.

very Brother, partaker of our flesh and blood, and shining with the human face Divine. But still we can address Him in actual prayer and praise. Nothing assists us so much in this as the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, which some of us use every day. Considering the awe which His great Name inspires, we cannot be too reverent in calling upon Him, and the more ancient the words of the Church to Him, the more they will guard our lips and our thoughts. But if we are careful, we shall find other utterances of devout souls, suited to our deepest self-abasement, our most earnest loving desires. Such a one, for instance, is that hymn, familiar and dear to many a Christian—

> "Come, Thou HOLY SPIRIT, come,
> And from Thy celestial home
> Shed a ray of light Divine;
> Come, Thou Father of the poor,
> Come, Thou Source of all our store,
> Come, within our bosoms shine!"[1]

Taught and inspired by Him, we learn to pray aright for the coming of the Kingdom, and our hearts are duly set upon it, knowing that, as the Church of GOD, that Kingdom is already among us. Refreshed and quickened by the heavenly dew of the SPIRIT'S blessing, we love and seek the heavenly city of the SPIRIT'S Home. We go forward on our journey, comforted by Him in our sorrows, and

[1] Hymns A. and M., 156.

empowered by Him even in our weakness, as those whose strength is now in GOD, those (to give the beautiful modern rendering of the Psalm) "in whose heart are the high ways to Zion. Passing through the valley of weeping they make it a place of springs, yea, the early rain covereth it with blessings. They go from strength to strength, every one of them appeareth in Zion before GOD."[1] And in that blessed hope we seek all graces from the SPIRIT, and praise Him for all His gifts, acknowledging Him daily to be "the LORD," as well as "the Giver of life," the One who is Himself to be glorified fully hereafter, as through the ages of faith He is always glorifying the SON.[2]

"To Thee we bring, who art the LORD,
Ourselves to be Thy throne;
Let every thought, and deed, and word,
Thy pure dominion own.

"O HOLY GHOST, of sevenfold might,
All graces come from Thee;
Grant us to know and serve aright
ONE GOD in Persons THREE."

Truly, that loving SPIRIT is our Guide unto the land of righteousness. He alone enables our minds to ascend thither now, revealing to us, in increasing measure, the things which GOD hath prepared for them that love Him. He alone can fit our souls and bodies to be there hereafter for ever. We wait

[1] Psalm lxxxiv (Revised Version). [2] St. John xvi. 14.

for a second mission of the COMFORTER, if at least the fruits of His first mission are being shown forth in our lives. "If the SPIRIT of Him that raised up JESUS from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up CHRIST from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His SPIRIT that dwelleth in you." So shall the promise have a twofold fulfilment. "He shall abide with you for ever." To the end here, and for ever there, He shall abide with the Church which is holy through Him alone, and with the faithful whom He alone is sanctifying—here for the little while of our probation and our progress, there for the countless ages of the light, and life, and love, which are His gifts in CHRIST.

Let us ever claim the promise, ever humbly and heartily seek His aid, on our homeward path.

"Lead us to CHRIST, the living way,
Nor let us from His pastures stray;
Lead us to holiness, the road
That we must take to dwell with GOD.

"Lead us to Heaven, that we may share
Fulness of joy for ever there;
Lead us to GOD, our final rest,
To be with Him for ever blest."

XLIII.

LIFE EVERLASTING.

"Death, a valley lone and dim,
And then, a deep and darkly-flowing river,
And then a flash of light, a seraph's hymn,
And GOD's own smile for ever and for ever."

"THERE shall be no more death." This is the unspeakable blessing which our hearts associate first with the thought of Heaven as our home. It is true that this is not, in itself, the highest or deepest joy attaching to the kingdom of our FATHER. "The LORD is my portion, saith my soul." To be with GOD, in all the goodness of that perfect love, which has made even the earth beautiful to us; to enter into the glory of the SAVIOUR, as here we have subsisted on His grace; to gain the gladness of the SPIRIT'S presence, whence came to us in this world His precious sevenfold gifts—this, the Christian feels, is the wonderful prize of our high calling, the exceeding great reward for all who truly love and serve the LORD.

But the boundless depth and complete fulness of

our joy in the Triune GOD depends upon its continuing ever, world without end. "One day," of course, "in His courts," even in this brief life, "is better than a thousand" elsewhere, and a ray of His comforting light is enough to refresh our souls in the very multitude of the sorrows which we have in our hearts. But that is because those tastes of His delights are foretastes of the pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore; these gleams of glory are the Divine forecast of the everlasting sunshine of His presence. Nothing less than this is promised us; nothing short of this is made over to us already, as we go forward in this life of faith, fearless of the bodily death which lies before us. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom Thou hast sent." It is for this that we are "born again of water and of the SPIRIT," that we may "enter into the kingdom of God"—the kingdom which, being His, shall have no end.

And so, life everlasting with the Everlasting GOD, is the goal of the Christian life—the glorious hope set before us as we take up the Cross of the LORD of glory, and follow Him who has overcome the sharpness of death and opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers. When He returns, there shall be, for those who are His, no more death.

O blessed hope of everlasting life! O speedy coming, present earnest and beginning of ever-

lasting life! What an attractive appeal is this to our faith! What consolation for us concerning those that are asleep! What a bright, pre-eminently joyful element in GOD'S revelation to us of the world to come!

Let us, who are at least trying to serve the LORD, speak often one to another of this great truth. Let us ask Him to enable us to embrace it and ever hold it fast. For indeed it is full of comfort.

1. As there shall be no more death, our bodies shall be "eternal in the Heavens." We need not disturb ourselves with any morbid fears as to what would happen if this flesh of ours were to be burned, or taken up into the substance of other creatures, or carried about in the "vast and wandering grave" of the great and wide sea. "This mortal," whatever happens to it, "shall put on immortality." The house with which we shall be clothed upon—the form which, with our souls, shall make up our complete self, will be a building of GOD, and He knoweth whereof we shall be made, as He knoweth whereof we are made now. What a change, in any case, shall pass over the buried body, though it should be embalmed for a thousand years, or its casket hermetically sealed till the end of time! "Thou sowest not that body that shall be." The soul bids farewell to the body as it is; it is the identity of the soul which shall give the same character to the new body, "the house not

made with hands." The body itself has an earthly substance when the soul parts from it. But the earthly substance could not be a heavenly frame, a heavenly form, for the soul which has passed through Paradise, and is entering into the realm of spirits, the immediate Presence of GOD. It is transformed for Heaven. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

Through its parting, the soul looks on to its meeting. But to all intents and purposes the body which it welcomes, which it acknowledges as its own, is altered wondrously. For JESUS will change the body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto the Body of His glory;[1] and the very thought of this makes our "hope full of immortality," and our heart full of joy; so that we can sing, up to the gates of death—

> "Oh! how glorious and resplendent,
> Fragile body, shalt thou be,

[1] "In the earthly state of humiliation CHRIST had a body bearing the likeness of our sinful flesh, and consequently subject to the trammels of material existence as experienced by ourselves. . . . In His risen estate the particles of matter which were in His body when He died, have become changed in their nature, so as no longer to be the trammels, but now to be the instruments, of the glorified humanity."—Rev. R. M. Benson, on "The Life beyond the Grave."

When endued with so much beauty,
Full of health, and strong, and free,
Full of vigour, full of pleasure,
That shall last eternally!"

Safely can we commune thus with ourselves, whether, with all the generations that are gone, we have to suffer dissolution, or remain alive on earth at the coming of the LORD. For, in either case, our outward frame must be transformed. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

2. Were it not for our body, we should have no doubt as to the immortality of our soul. And the very first realization of the spiritual body will make us realize also that we have risen either to everlasting life, or to shame and everlasting contempt,[1] and that we have risen *with our bodies* for this.

But the soul bears within itself the witness of its own inherent deathlessness, as it came from the LORD of the spirits of all flesh. "GOD created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of His own eternity." This surely was a spiritual likeness—a reflection and representation, in the spirit of man, of the life of GOD who is a SPIRIT. It was the purity and freedom of the will. When, even here, the will is bent to the will of GOD, he who thus wills is gradually changed into the same image, from glory to glory. And when he sees GOD as He is, GOD brings the will of the man into perfect

[1] Daniel xii. 2.

conformity to His will. Our ignorance and our knowledge meet here wonderfully. We know not, but we know. "We know not yet what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." So shall we, again, if penitent and faithful, be the image of His own eternity. Even through death we shall live—even when our body dies, our soul does not even sleep. Sleep is the tired body's portion, not that of the soul, whose portion is GOD Himself, and whose life, even during this mortal state, was "hid with CHRIST in GOD." We rest upon His word, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die." This completes the Divine witness to the everlasting life of the dead in CHRIST. The body rises, marvellously changed, eternally quickened. The soul, never separated from CHRIST its life, passes to the everlasting habitation. Blessed indeed are they who have part in this resurrection. There is indeed another aspect of that Day. One solemn passage, one awful warning from Him who has knowledge of Heaven and Hell, commands us to "fear Him who can destroy both body and soul." But, as His will was to have all men to be saved, and as, in His loving purpose, He is "the SAVIOUR of all men," each repentant believing soul can stay itself on the blessed promise which became really its own, in the acceptance of JESUS as the LORD, according to His word, "He that hath the SON hath life."

Those who, in Him, and for His sake, shall be counted worthy to attain that world, continue what GOD made them here, "partakers of the Divine nature,"[1] and arise simply as His children, "the children of the resurrection," "neither can they die any more," as JESUS Himself assures us.[2]

O what life, what immortality, He hath brought to light through the gospel!

We need not sorrow now, as those that have no hope. We stand in faith, as Mary of Bethany actually stood, beside our dead in CHRIST, and beside CHRIST, who loves them infinitely better than we ourselves, since He gave His priceless life for them. We believe with her that He is the Resurrection and the Life—and we watch her as she watches Him, and the sight of one who was dead is granted to her, and behold! he liveth.

> "Then one deep love doth supersede
> All other, as her ardent gaze
> Roves from the living brother's face
> And rests upon the Life indeed."

Our faith is "the evidence of things not seen." But we believe that with us, as with the patriarchs, GOD cannot be the "GOD of the dead, but of the living." We believe that all live unto Him, that "GOD has given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His SON," and that we need not be afraid, as

[1] 2 St. Pet. i. 4. [2] St. Luke xx. 36.

believers in Him, as in union with Him, to die. Our fears are taken away, as well as our mourning. We have hope in CHRIST, and as we walk by faith, and not by sight, we are content to trust to Him our departed friends, and our own departing souls. As Shakespeare reminds us—

> "Comfort's in Heaven, and we are on the earth,
> Where nothing lives but crosses, care, and grief."

But crosses, care, and grief, are coming quickly to an end, and the voice of GOD blends with the hope of man, to tell us that they that mourn shall be comforted, and that though we be dead, yet shall we live, never for one moment losing our "eternal inheritance" of "the everlasting kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST."

XLIV.

PAIN AND SORROW UNKNOWN.

"The exile is at home!
O nights and days of tears,
O longings not to roam,
O sins and doubts and fears.
What matters now grief's darkest day?
The King has wiped those tears away."

NEALE.

DEATH destroyed; the grave despoiled of its victory, just when it seems most triumphant; never-ending life in GOD and with GOD and for GOD—this is the glorious prospect which closes the vista of the coming years, and makes us rejoice unspeakably in the boundless future.

But freedom from death is not necessarily freedom from all evils. One vision of the Revelation puts before us an awful picture when it tells us that "men shall seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them."[1] Even in this world there are troubles, which do not

[1] Rev. ix. 6.

of themselves tend immediately to death—troubles almost worse than death, since they render our brief pilgrimage bitter and burdensome. There are sorrows of sickness, and physical agony, and weary achings of the body which draw men of the world to wish that they might die, and which to the Christian are only endurable on account of the Cross of CHRIST thus laid upon them in the wisdom and love of GOD. We need great grace to glory in such tribulations. Most of us feel that the maladies and pangs and qualms and sudden accidents which even healthful flesh is heir to, give a sad complexion to life, and a sting to its pleasures, and place difficulties in the way of its progress.

All will be different above. When the last enemy is destroyed, disease and misery and all the ills of our fallen nature will be removed from "the children of the resurrection." For "GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things," which we have known so well and felt so deeply, "are passed away."[1] Jerusalem the golden will be the city of perfect joy. We marvel at such a thought. There never has been such a thing on earth. But then GOD will make all things new. The very idea starts an unheard-of wonder and delight. He tells us so—"Be ye glad and rejoice

[1] Rev. xxi. 5.

in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying."[1]

It is difficult to imagine a greater contrast. To think of that which is among the saddest sights on earth—the suffering of little children—and to reflect what a multitude this represents, and then to be assured that this is but a loving discipline from GOD, and that in Heaven there shall be nothing to answer to it, nothing but the brightness and the blessedness of those thus early trained. Or, to look upon the vast number of chronic invalids, passing patiently on from year to year without hope of complete cure or lasting relief, and then to remember that the very meaning of such chronic complaints is that they continue so long only as our *time* continues, and that in eternity they will never be found. Or, to feel within ourselves the advance of some insidious disease, or the sudden stroke of "some ghastly spasm or racking torture,"[2] and then to be cheered, as by "a beam from Heaven's own morning," with the HOLY SPIRIT'S word that hereafter, when we

[1] Isaiah lxv. 18, 19.

[2] Readers of Milton will recall the extraordinary description of the "lazar-house" of our poor humanity, in the Eleventh Book of "Paradise Lost."

have borne our cross as Christian men, "there shall be no more pain."

What a stay for those who now are called upon to endure; for those who must watch, in helpless sympathy, helpless but for prayer, the endurance of their beloved!

What reassurance for the disappointed and the heart-broken, whose life seems utterly darkened, permanently saddened, with the mental and spiritual pain of a great loss, to be told, on the witness of GOD, that "the patience and the faith of the saints," ay, of those who are trying to be holy amid the gloom of happiness impaired, shall bring them in a little while to "die in the LORD," and so to "rest from their labours," till at last they are for ever satisfied, for ever glad before GOD. No longer then shall there be, again and again as here, no, not once again, the sowing in tears in order to the reaping in joy, for the bliss of the redeemed will be as a perpetual perfected "joy in harvest."

What a strong consolation for those who are really sorry for sin, sincerely endeavouring to lead a new life, to realize that the painful seriousness of repentance has so entirely GOD'S blessing upon it, that it issues, for His sake, in exceeding great joy; that for all penitents, from the least to the greatest, the conscience-stricken child as well as the old man just awakened, who come to know GOD thus in time, yes, for all He has this wonderful word, "I will

forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more."[1] It shall be absolutely and eternally blotted out; and they shall share the mirth which the pure and the true have always enjoyed, even in this life. And there will be nothing hollow in the laughter of Heaven; no secret misgiving that the end of its mirth is heaviness. All will be gladness before GOD, His glory and His gift.

This truly was one chief object of the anointing of our LORD and SAVIOUR. We know, indeed, that He became the CHRIST in order to make us Christians; that He sanctified Himself that we might be holy, both in body and in soul. But He looked beyond and above. His language here (you will find it so, the more you study it) breathed always of Heaven and its blessings. And the words which, centuries before He came, told of His gracious work in the SPIRIT—the words which He spoke of as fulfilled in Himself—are words which, ever since, even to this present moment, have cheered all troubled souls who have really attended to them. For they tell us that He came, that He was anointed, that it was His habit and delight, "to comfort all that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."[2]

This is the promise that upholds the militant

[1] Jer. xxxi. 34. [2] Isaiah lxi. 1-3; St. Luke iv. 17.

Church, the Zion of our solemnities and of His grace. And if, even here, we gain such peace and joy, such beautiful and Divine compensations, how complete, how free from all after-decline or casting down, will be the gladness of the penitent and faithful members of CHRIST JESUS, when they see Him as He is, and know that they are one Body with Him in the new Jerusalem!

Let us close with two earnest steadfast purposes for our daily life.

First, whenever affliction presses, and comforters fail, or cannot speak exactly the word we need, we must set ourselves to draw nigh unto GOD, and by faith to behold Him and the blessed Home. As a poor Arabian woman said, "When we look on GOD'S face, we do not feel His hand." So let us ask Him that He would show us here the light of His countenance, and thereby lessen for us the burden of our woes and cares. For then we shall pass through the vale of weeping and the valley of the shadow, as those who have been upon the Holy Mount, and wake up after CHRIST'S likeness, to be for ever satisfied with it. What a blessing then will our distresses have been to us! The more sorrow and pain, the oftener at the gate of Heaven. One journey thither, under His loving guidance; one word of promise from Him, that the aches and griefs of this body of death shall depart altogether

from the spiritual body within the veil, one whisper of the still small voice, to tell us that no troubles shall there distract us, no trials there deject us—and we shall come back for the few remaining years or days of our pilgrimage, and feel even thankful that it is *given* to us to suffer for His sake. How perfectly shall we rejoice hereafter!

> "If Thy first glance so powerful be,
> A mirth but open'd, and seal'd up again;
> What wonders shall we feel, when we shall see
> Thy full-eyed love!
> When thou shalt look us out of pain,
> And one aspect of Thine spend in delight,
> More than a thousand suns disburse in light,
> In Heaven above."[1]

And let our other resolution be this, closely linked to the first. O my soul, set thyself to the patient waiting for CHRIST, and do this as one who followeth Him and walketh in His steps. He looked beyond this suffering life to the crown of His precious death and passion. He, "for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame," and we will trust Him with the issue of our sufferings, and, as crucified with Him, will rise with Him, in faith and hope, to the realm where sorrows cease. In our patience we shall possess our souls. In our penitent patience we shall look

[1] George Herbert, "The Glance."

forward, not only to the eternal life of rest and joy, but also to the eternal destruction of those sins of ours which have caused the chief part of our pain.

O may we be numbered among those saints of GOD, who have been made, like the glorious Captain of their salvation, "perfect through suffering"—those of whom it is written, "The ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

XLV.

PERPETUAL LIGHT.

"The perfect day of God is shadowless,
And love is love alway."

WHITTIER.

No death, no pain, not any tears, nor any suffering, in Heaven; and "there shall be no night there."

Strange that such a description should attract and gladden us; that it should be given us to enhance the joy of Jerusalem which is above; and that we should feel that it does do so. Is it not strange? Should we not, if left to ourselves, think it a curious and doubtful element of good in the world to come, that there should be no night there?

To us, the wayfarers of the world, to us who have a difficult and wearying work to do each day, night comes as a relief, a relief for tired eyes and exhausted frames and aching heads and minds disturbed. We crave not only a sabbath for the week, but a repose after the day. We must have first plenty of daylight for our labours, but also an interval of recruit without the glare of the sun, or

even the heat of the lamp. We hardly know how we could live, without the night wherein to take our rest.

But hereafter this will be changed. In the spiritual world our "spiritual body" will have very different conditions and surroundings from those of our "natural body" in this world of nature. We may, it is true, very reasonably believe that even in that other world our spirits may be environed by material things; and that though we shall not depend upon them on the one hand, nor on the other have to fear them, yet some of the planets glittering on their heavenly way may be to us objects of deep interest, as wonderful creations of GOD. Yet, of all such things, we shall surely have more than a mere physical sight. If GOD, who is a Spirit, can look, as He tells us He will look, upon the rainbow; if GOD can touch the mountains, and they shall smoke; if He can cast forth lightnings, and destroy the bodies of men—we who are already "partakers of the Divine Nature," and shall have, please GOD, spiritual forms in the world beyond the grave, may yet expect to study there the marvellous work of GOD, visible as well as invisible. Only, our faculties, our energies, will be in entire contrast to what we experience in the world of sense. And neither for such objects as these, nor for the higher objects, shall we require the alternation of night and day.

1. There shall be no night there; for we shall have no wearisome toil. Occupations indeed[1] we may expect, occupations will be our delight in Heaven; but they will not tire our powerful and incorruptible bodies, and we shall not need to wish each other "good night," when this service or that has been accomplished for our LORD. We shall not need the re-creation mercifully granted us here in sleep. Nature's soft nurse will have no office there, nor shall we miss her any more.

> "There no night brings rest from labour,
> For unknown are toil and care."

Here, day by day, as we seek our light at eventide, we have to pray that the LORD would mercifully defend us from all perils and dangers of the night; and our heart rejoices greatly in the expectation, the Divine prediction, that hereafter these will have no existence: there will be no sphere among GOD'S people for the crafts and subtleties of the devil or man; no fear at all of the pestilence that walketh in darkness, or of the sudden fiery flame.

2. Nor shall there be mental darkness there. In this world, the hours of the night are types of terror to us at times, types of the clouded path and the bewildered brain and black fancies we know not what. In our present imperfect condition, the

[1] See Chapter xlviii.

night, as it keeps following the day, suggests to us, ay even as a warning of Holy Writ, that though the light is sweet, it cannot here always abide with us. "If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many." And oh! how often that prolonged season of loss of sunshine, that blotting out of the beautiful clear sky, comes to us in a sort of forecast, saddening our lives while it is yet noontide with us, and casting us into a great fear! Much patience is needed then; and specially perhaps should we remember in those times of depression and alarm, that they are partly intended, in the loving wisdom of our GOD, to make us so penitent, so distrustful of ourselves, so reliant upon Him whatever may happen to us, that hereafter we need have no such fears, no such appalling sense of desolation, but gain actual "boldness in the Day of Judgment." Let us wait on the LORD, even where no ray of hope seems sent to us; wait on Him, in the faith and love of those who truly repent. The light is coming. It may even now be close to the dawning of the day.

"Soon shall come the great awaking,
Soon the rending of the tomb;
Then the scattering of all shadows,
And the end of toil and gloom."

3. Once more—and this is but the unfolding of

the same thought, under a more spiritual aspect. There will never more, when that day dawns, be loss of heavenly light; no withdrawal again of our FATHER'S Face. It is an awful sorrow which, for our sins, we must expect here at times. If, in His atoning Sacrifice, the Everlasting SON Himself, as representing our fallen race, had to feel the awfulness of being, for a moment, forsaken of GOD, and left in a horror of great darkness—we must not be surprised if there come times in our lives, when we, who have sinned so deeply, have to cry "out of the deep" to Him, when He seems to cover Himself with a cloud that our prayer should not pass through. It shows the faith of a true penitent, to abide trustfully in such a state as this; to endure, without murmuring, the sore trial, by far the worst on earth, of the present loss of GOD, assured that, all the while, He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all, no real abandonment of any who casts away his sins in earnest and looks to JESUS. O let us rest on the Gospel promise of our GOD—that promise which must have sustained through years of discouragement and twilight, and often through the most hopeless night, the souls which looked for redemption ere CHRIST came; that promise which shows how entirely and with what perfect sympathy the LORD had known their adversity and gloom. "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the LORD shall

be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."[1]

They say, who watch the heavens, that the systems of double or triple or quadruple stars must produce, for the worlds which move around them, marvellous combinations of light and colour, varying brightness rather than changes of night and day.

May we not discover herein at least an illustration of the truth revealed to us as to the glories of the Home of all the saints? We need not think of them, indeed, as dependent on any created light; for all created lights must sooner or later pass away; while all spiritual beings must abide.

"Heavenward! Faith discerns the prize
That is waiting us afar,
And my heart would swiftly rise,
High o'er sun, and moon, and star,
To the light behind the veil,
Where all earthly splendours pale."

Faith lifts us up beyond and above the eclipse of nature and the majesty of darkness to rest in Him who is alike our life and our light. One stanza at least of Campbell's strange poem on "The Last Man" is for us the true language of Christian Faith:—

"This spirit shall return to Him
Who gave its heavenly spark;

[1] Isaiah lx. 20.

Yet think not, sun, it shall be dim
When thou thyself art dark!
No! it shall live again, and shine
In bliss unknown to beams of thine,
By Him recalled to breath,
Who captive led captivity,
Who robbed the grave of victory,
And took the sting from death."

Faith thinks of the blind man, for whom there is no light here, awakening in the resurrection body, and rejoicing that there is no night there. Faith hears the blind poet, "cut off from the cheerful ways of men, and wisdom at one entrance quite shut out," praying that the "Celestial Light may shine inward, that so he may see and tell of things invisible to mortal sight."[1] Faith opens the eyes of the mind, that it may prepare for the coming of the everlasting morn, and cast away all works of darkness now. Faith asks how any science, any wisdom of illuminated men, can refuse its homage to that LORD of glory who is Light, and who filleth all in all, and has proved Himself in history, and in spite of the ignorances and relapses of His followers, the true Light to lighten every man. Faith inquires, in no arrogant spirit, whether He to whom the sinless Heaven owes the light that fills and beautifies it, should not daily be adored and desired as the Light of this world. For this was the vision, this the explanation, of the endless

[1] Milton. "Paradise Lost," Book iii.

day predicted for all believers. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of GOD did lighten it, and the LAMB is the Light thereof." Bright and blessed revelation of what shall be hereafter, of what is being witnessed even now! May it keep us steadfast on the pathway of faith, in the work of love, as true repentant children of GOD, that we may "walk in the light, as He is in the light," and so have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of JESUS CHRIST His SON may cleanse us from all sin. May it cheer us in the prayer of faith, the intercession of love, such as that which the tender harmony of Mendelssohn's music helps us to raise on high.

"Oh Thou, the true and only Light,
Direct the souls that walk in night,
And bring them 'neath Thy sheltering care,
To find their blest redemption there.

"Illumine those who blindly roam,
And call the erring wanderers home:
The hearts astray that union crave,
And those in doubt, confirm and save."

XLVI.

THE STATE OF UNBROKEN BLESSEDNESS.

"In the world woes follow fast,
And a bitter death comes last,
But in heaven shall nought destroy
Endless peace and love and joy."

ALBINUS, 1652.

No darkness there, nor death. Not any sorrows for the saints of GOD, nor any pain or sickness. "And there shall be no more curse."

How many a heart rejoices in that promise! Nay, who that lives in the blessed hope of the eternal glory does not rejoice in a promise, so entirely corrective of the miseries of earth? It seems to take away all possibility of discordant notes in the harmonies of Heaven, all black lines from the marvellous light which streams down upon us through the celestial gates.

O tidings of great joy—sweet fruit of the everlasting Gospel. "There shall be no curse any more."

At the very beginning of the Bible—after man's

shameful fall—the curse is pronounced upon man's disobedience: the ground is cursed for his sake; it is to bring forth thorns and thistles; its profit is "vanity of vanities"; sorrow rests upon the conception and the birth; the heart and character lie open to the assaults of the accursed enemy of GOD and man.

All through the Bible, the tokens of that curse are manifest and manifold. The first-born of Eve, slaying his brother through deadly yielding to the tempter, falls, not under the primary, but under the personal curse.[1] Gradually, the earth is filled with violence, and its destruction comes from GOD. And though, as the Flood subsides, the patriarch's faith in the coming SAVIOUR, typified by the thankful sacrifice, withdraws the curse of utter confusion and desolation from man's world,[2] yet, short of this, while harvests never leave the earth, nor the seasons (as in that awful Deluge) are entirely confounded, the sins even of GOD'S people bring again and again and again tremendous chastisement upon them; and they themselves, like their very fields, bearing thorns and briers, are "nigh unto cursing." Blessings indeed are ever held out to the faithful as they bend themselves to hear GOD'S word and to do His will; but all the while there sounds forth, in fearful warnings, His curse upon the rebellious and the unbelieving. And as these increase, the mag-

[1] Gen. iv. 11. [2] Gen. viii. 21.

nificent language even of the evangelical prophet rebukes their madness and their sin, telling them of the doleful judgments of the LORD, ripening as it were the curse which darkened Paradise. "The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth." So is it throughout. The psalmist who sings of mercy, sings of judgment too. The beloved seer, himself a faithful penitent confesses his own sins with those of his countrymen, and owns how justly the curse is poured upon them all. The LORD GOD, even while He speaks of His readiness to forgive, connects the faults of the children with those of their "first father," and declares as His sentence, "Therefore have I given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches." From prophet to prophet, from generation to generation, is handed on the Divine admonition, and at last the Old Testament ends with the call to prepare for "the great and dreadful day of the LORD . . . lest" He "come and smite the earth with a curse."

And even as we open the New Testament, and study its words of unspeakable comfort, thorough pardon, and perfect peace through CHRIST, we

realize the presence, all along, of a very terrible element—of a power which can destroy as well as preserve—of a King who will judge hereafter, though here "mighty to save"—of a law within the heart and conscience, ready to condemn, if not lovingly obeyed.

Which of us has not felt that inner witness to the reality of the curse, as well as the reality of the blessing? Which of us does not recognize at times within himself that accusing voice which anticipates the Judgment, and makes us restless and unhappy? And with some among us the sense of the curse has been much more than this. Here is one whose memory is full of the taint of bygone years, the oaths and idle words of youth storing the mature mind with blasphemy. And here is another, who, having deeply repented, still has, as even holy men have had, Satan standing on the right hand, to accuse and alarm. And here is another, whose life is made miserable by the imprecations and filthy speaking of the wicked, and who has to breathe an atmosphere of evil. And here is yet another, knowing the goodness of the LORD, but chiefly fearing Him as a Taskmaster, who is watching to punish him. And there are others still, who fancy themselves already under the anger of GOD, sinking into despair before Him who would constrain us, by our very fears, to love and trust Him.

Yes, even the Gospel of GOD has not as yet

dispersed the gloom and dread of the evil tidings. CHRIST came, it is true, to speak peace to our souls; to bid us repent, so that we may not suffer; to deliver us from the curse, by being made (O wonderful expression!) "a curse for us"; to place us so entirely under grace, that, like the receptive and reproductive field, we may receive blessing from GOD. But still the wicked one would ever draw us away from our blessings; and the world, which forgetteth GOD, soon robs us of our peace, as we forget Him; and self-pleasing, in any of its many forms, leaves behind it afterwards the pain of self-reproach, as really "the worm that dieth not."

And so, even yet, the curse seems to haunt and disquiet us, sometimes (through our wilful continuance in sin, or through our refusal to confess it) truly resting upon us, sometimes possessing us for weeks and months because we will not pray, or hiding from us the glory and the efficacy of the Cross, and darkening utterly our life.

There are many things which keep us still under the curse, when we might be rejoicing under the Cross. Let us break their bonds asunder, always remembering that, as far as our will is concerned, we must resist their power now, and that a priceless blessing is offered to us if we do resist. "There shall be no more curse." As the Bible closes, the curse is for ever removed, for Heaven is fully come, and the saints possess the Kingdom.

All things on which the curse has rested, or might rest, are removed as we see Heaven opened—removed from the holy community of faithful people, never to touch them more.

The earth which bare the curse for centuries has melted away, and in the new Heaven and the new earth dwelleth righteousness; and there is no death to make us subject to the bondage of fear; and the Tree of Life brings health and joy.

The wicked and all the people that forget GOD have been taken away. GOD'S people are all righteous. No sounds of hatred, no pleasures of sin, no words of temptation or reproach disturb their peace.

The bodies of the saints have been transformed and spiritualized, and all their old thoughts of blasphemy and sin have perished.

The cause of the curse—the presence of the evil one—departs for ever. "The accuser of the brethren is cast down, which accused them before our GOD day and night." His place is found no more in Heaven, and the glorious angels are our companions for eternity, and, with them, those whom GOD made our blessing here.

And GOD, even our own GOD, lifts up the light of His countenance upon us, and gives us the everlasting peace of His redeeming love—that love which was assured to us, even on earth, by the grace of His SON and the fellowship of His HOLY SPIRIT—

"That love which changed—for wan disease,
For sorrow that had bent
O'er hopeless dust, for withered age—
Their moral element,
And turned the thistles of a curse
To types beneficent."

Oh! who would forfeit the blessed hope which that great love reveals? Who would not bear with patience the troubles of this brief life, which, after all, are never a curse to the true Christian man? Who would not seek GOD'S Face, by penitence and prayer, by charity and cheerfulness, to be in Him for ever blest?

The bright little flower on the rock, raised to life and beauty from its annual funeral, may be a simple emblem to us of our own reviving from death and evil, to gain the benediction of our LORD.

"Sin-blighted though we are, we too,
The reasoning sons of men,
From one oblivious winter called
Shall rise, and breathe again;
And in eternal summer lose
Our three score years and ten.

"To humbleness of heart descends
This prescience from on high,
The faith that elevates the just,
Before and when they die,
And makes each soul a separate Heaven,
A court for Deity"

XLVII.

PERFECT REST.

"True Pilot Thou of those at sea,
Sweet guide of hearts distrest,
O bring us where our souls would be,
To Heaven, Home, and Rest."

W. CHATTERTON DIX.

CANAAN is pre-eminently a type of Heaven, and in nothing more remarkably than in the element of rest. Toilsome was the way through the wilderness, long were the years for patience, great and terrible the conflict with the enemies, trying to faith the passage of the narrow Jordan, varied the probation and the discipline and the chastisements of the people. But at last "the LORD gave them rest round about." As He had solemnly declared unto their fathers that unbelief would prevent them from entering into His rest, so for those who finished their course, and fought the good fight, the Holy Land was kept securely, and His rest was full of delight. And yet it was but a figure of the true. Joshua, though his name is the same as JESUS, was

only a shadow of Him which was to come to give us rest. The Heavenly Canaan was ever to be kept in view. The Divine Joshua was to be the Minister of the true Tabernacle, the Guide for life and death, the Captain of our salvation, the One whose presence gives us continually the assurance that "there remaineth a rest to the people of GOD."

This is the beautiful promise which comes down the stream of the ages to us, this the solace for us in that war of ours which has no discharge, this the blessed end of all our labours in the LORD, this the encouragement from the Crucified Himself to all who will bear His Cross, this the free and grand reward of Christian duty, this the eternal peace for the conscience which keeps itself void of offence and the heart which knows no guile.

Here is the secret of that quietness through which we who have believed do enter into rest even in this world of unrest. Here is the comfort which brightens to us the unseen Paradise, as the antechamber of the Presence of our Eternal King, which enables us to pray our *Requiescat* for each of those who have died in His faith and fear, which takes away our own fear of death, in the conviction that, as members of CHRIST, we can lay us down in peace, and take our rest.

And here, above all, comes to us the sure and certain hope of that new life beyond the grave, that life, which, with all its occupations and all its

energies, will yet be perfect and eternal rest. Not in any passing enthusiasm, but in happy settled expectation we may say—

"Oh! how illustrious is that land,
And how magnificent the band
Of angels and mankind,
O glorious city, where is found
Supremest rest, in every bound
Both light and peace combined."

How can we bring home to our hearts this special revelation of the SPIRIT touching the future condition of the saints? What does the Word of GOD teach us, what does the Church of GOD believe, concerning this holy rest?

1. First, the very surroundings of our life in glory will suggest to us a peace to which we are strangers here. The holy evangelist, to whom, more than to others, the celestial visions were opened, writes that when he "saw a new Heaven and a new earth, for the first Heaven and the first earth were passed away," he saw also that "there was no more sea." Now the sea, in the language of GOD, is a typical illustration of the restlessness of sinful men. They "are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest." Ever drawing down, ever casting up, at times furious with mighty storms, at no time perfectly free from motion, rising and falling in its tides, full of unknown perils to those who pass over it, seeming, even as a burial-place, a "vast and *wandering* grave"

—this sea of ours, with all its delight and charm for us, all its depth and beauty and life, is yet connected in our minds with unquiet, and disturbance, and destruction, and separation; and the Divine intimation that there will be nothing like it hereafter, gives us a sense of comfort, relief, and peace, quite different from the awful waterless wastes of the silver moon—since in Heaven there is a spiritual river, the streams whereof make glad the City of GOD, and the spiritual bodies of the saints are bathed in the ocean of His love.

2. There, in that realm of free and joyful service, we shall have no fatigue in our toil—no toil which can weary us—no weariness in the doing of our FATHER'S will. Here we often set out in the morning with a brave heart, and say we feel as if we could walk for ever, and are equal to any work. But the noonday finds us craving a little rest, and the very partaking of our food adds awhile to our tiredness, and when the night falls, we have come to the end of our strength, and need the re-creation of it through the sleep which He gives us, and the darkness which then is for us better than the light. Hereafter, these changes will be changed: work will no longer be work, in the sense of a wearing occupation; and rest will be rest indeed, the rest, not of idleness or exhaustion, but of love and praise, of wayfaring men, whose very way is life and joy. No fevered brain shall perplex us there; no sinking of

the heart shall bring us near the tremblings of death; no powerlessness of hands or feet shall make us despair of the fruit of our labour; we shall neither feel the burden of our duties, nor the weakness which makes them burdensome in this present time. The care of others will no longer weigh us down, nor the care of the Church put too heavy a strain upon mind and body, nor the care of our feeble frame prevent us from helping others, or from working for the Church. We shall have forgotten the struggles of earth, except to give GOD thanks for them; and in Heaven care and toil will be quite unknown.

3. And there, too, will be perfect deliverance from strife, and bitterness, and envying, and provocation. It is with no ill-will, in no harsh spirit, but rather in the fullest patience and with humble prayer for our enemies, that we realize the ancient promise which has cheered so many generations, "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest." Here, in our Christian labour, in our common tasks, in our worship, in our reception of help, and our enjoyment of friendship, we must expect the marring of our peace, the suspecting of our motives; and the more we try to live godly in CHRIST JESUS, the more must we be prepared to suffer persecution. There, all this will have passed away; and we are assured, not to make us triumph over our adversaries, but to keep us true towards

GOD, and patient towards men, that He will surely repay both the persecutor and the persecuted. "It is a righteous thing with GOD, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with CHRIST."[1]

4. Again, what a blessed thought it is that then, in that happy Home, we shall rest for ever from a sense of GOD'S displeasure! Here, too often, it is not the unkindness of others, but the rebellion of our own heart, which keeps us restless. There, if we have sincerely repented, and bent ourselves to do GOD'S will, and lived the forgiving life, we shall have the rest of everlasting penitence and everlasting pardon, the rest in which the pure and the purified can rejoice together, in Him who is their only Righteousness and their only Rest. Even here, in this world of anguish and tumult, our foretastes of that Eternal Peace are real. GOD grants us godly quietness. He guides us with His eye, watching the path for us, and seeing the end, and finding us shelters of hopeful rest by the way, even when all seems dark. As John of Gaunt says to his banished son—

> "All places that the eye of Heaven visits
> Are to a wise man ports and happy havens."

GOD bids us notice these, and use them. They seem to tell us, as from Him, that everywhere we can

[1] 2 Thess. i. 6.

learn to rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; that we have but little labour, and yet can get unto ourselves much rest; that, if we will but be content with His gifts, and thankful for them, our sleep shall be sweet unto us, and our mind quite free from care; that holiness is not only the road to peace, but the way of peace, not only bringing us to peace, but bringing peace to us.

5. Finally, let me remember, O my soul, that the true, abiding, everlasting rest of Heaven implies alike His dwelling in us, and our dwelling in Him. This is the very promise of our LORD in His Holy Eucharist. This it is which, during our life in the militant Church, brings us nearest to that perfect rest, which will only be fully ours in Heaven. Here indeed, again and again, we have to seek Him from one Communion to another, and are inwardly restless because we do not yet, in faith and love, find rest in Him. But there we shall be at anchor, and the afflictions and wanderings and disquietude of our voyage will be over, and all will be for ever secure. As the devout writer of the "Saints' Rest" says, "We shall no more look into our cabinet and miss our treasure, into our hearts and miss our CHRIST." He will be ever with us, ever in us, completing the mystical indwelling. He abides in the spirit of the Christian man, as He abides in the bosom of the Christian Church. "This shall be My rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein."

The everlasting Presence will be the joy of the everlasting sabbath—its true joy, and the secret of its happy rest. His holy day on earth,[1] for those who have made it an honourable and delightful day, is a pledge of the brightness and the pleasure, the rest and glory, of that eternal sabbath, which has nothing gloomy about it, and nothing irksome.

"There, where no troubles distraction can bring,
We the sweet anthems of Sion shall sing,
While for Thy grace, LORD, their voices of praise
Thy blessed people eternally raise.
There dawns no sabbath, no sabbath is o'er,
Those sabbath-keepers have one evermore."

To those, of course, who have neglected Him and His day, and thereby "forgotten their resting-place," the first day of the week speaks not of the opening light of the everlasting morn, the day of joy which has neither cloud nor end. But those who here are careful not to do their pleasure on His holy day—those who are glad to rest according to the commandment, in order the better to serve Him all the days of their life—they are always looking forward with hope and faith to the fulfilment of the promise; for they know and feel that His service is perfect freedom here, and there "His rest shall be glorious."

[1] It is much to be noticed that he who wrote so fully about the Saints' Rest in Heaven, had a marvellous influence in drawing the people among whom he ministered to observe religiously and cheerfully the LORD'S Day on earth.

XLVIII.

KNOWLEDGE, WORSHIP, AND SERVICE.

"How could he rest? Even then he trod
The threshold of the world unknown;
Already from the seat of GOD
A ray upon his garments shone—
Shone and awoke the strong desire
For love and knowledge reached not here;
Till, freed by death, his soul of fire
Sprang to a fairer, ampler sphere."

(*Death of Schiller*) BRYANT.

REST is sweet, and GOD'S rest which He would have us enter and enjoy for ever is part of Heaven's eternal bliss. But the state of the redeemed, wherever their place may be hereafter, will be one, not of absolute quietude, as in the Paradise where they rest from their labours, but of active life and full-grown energy.

It is difficult to realize this while we are here—as difficult, perhaps, for the contemplative Mary as for the busy Martha. Have we not seen even Christians, devout and diligent people, startled by the question, "What would you do in Heaven?"

Well for us if such a question makes us think about the occupations of our future life, not in a dreamy or presumptuous way, not as if we knew all about it, nor yet as if we might boldly fancy anything we pleased, but rather as those who are instructed out of the Holy Scriptures unto the kingdom of GOD, and as those who gather Divine intimations concerning what we are to do hereafter from the analogy of that which He clearly bids us do on earth in preparation for His work in Heaven.

Now this is very noticeable. The Apostle, for instance, did not tell us, no man can tell us for certain, either what GOD hath prepared for them that love Him, or what definite things, in the way of delightful duty, He will entrust to those whom He loves. A profound Irish writer[1] reminds us that we cannot know the details of the celestial life. "The abodes in which we are to dwell, the companions with whom we shall rejoice, the bodies—bright similitudes of CHRIST—which we are to wear,—all these and the like are matters beyond our limited conjecture." "But then," he adds, "it is not in these things that we are bound to practise the celestial life on earth; for no man is bound to the impossible. The principles of that life, the great general laws of heart and spirit that govern it—these it is that are to be principles and laws of this life, and these are clear and indisputable."

[1] Archer Butler.

And the forms of our work on earth—that is, of the work which GOD gave us to do, giving us also ability to do them—seem evidently, like coming events which cast their shadows before, to portend the occupations of Heaven. These are knowledge, worship, and service.

Of these we have, be it repeated, the reflection or the forecast here. But we look forward to them also on the double ground of the partial revelation of GOD and the present happiness of man. Let us, very shortly, consider each by itself.

1. Knowledge, almost all of us feel, is one chief object of our earthly life. In every department of human learning, from the little child acquiring the alphabet up to the greatest teacher of science, we all are trying to know. In every branch of Biblical research, on every road and field-path of religious education, from the well-instructed and deeply-read professor up to the little child, that "best philosopher" in the things of GOD, all are seeking for wisdom. All the world over, save in the realms of heathen ignorance, and even there in strange movements towards the light, many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increased. And who that thinks about it can doubt that this is the purpose—one purpose, certainly—for us in the mind of Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Who will not own that man's gradual increase in knowledge is his Divinely ordered way

towards that which GOD has always known? He gave the laws of nature: He desires us to find them out. He created the heavens and the earth: He sets us on the discovery of their secrets and their glories. He made man "to be an image of His own eternity": He would have man inquire into the mystery of his immortal being and the end of his chequered life. He has the keys of all knowledge: He would have us seek them at His hands, and open everything we can. Well may the believer, amid all his perplexities, ask—

> "Who loves not knowledge? Who shall rail
> Against her beauty? May she mix
> With men and prosper! Who shall fix
> Her pillars? Let her work prevail."

It is only in one sense that "he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Apart from GOD, apart from a belief in the overruling, all-loving providence of GOD, we are saddened by much of what we learn. But, when guided by His eye, we feel that knowledge is power, and life, and joy. And the very fact that here we can, at our best, know but in part deepens the conviction in us that hereafter (if we have moved forward in reverence and in love) we shall know even as also we are known. As here, when we really grow in grace, we grow also in the knowledge of our LORD and SAVIOUR, so there may we hope to attain, in a state of greater nearness and clearer vision, to a more intimate

knowledge of Him still, in the spiritual understanding of that nature of the HOLY TRINITY, which is summed up in the truth that "GOD is LOVE."

Knowledge, as signifying merely intellectual science, shall in time "vanish away"; but the knowledge of GOD and of the worlds which He has made, and of all His wonderful and beautiful works, may then be granted to the faculties of our spiritual body, when all the thoughts of our brain shall have perished. O marvellous hope of knowing GOD! That is eternal life.

"In Thee my powers, my treasures live,
To Thee my life must tend;
Giving Thyself, Thou all dost give,
O soul-sufficing Friend."

2. How truly then, both there and here, must worship be intended to occupy and exercise us as the children and servants of GOD! The very foolishness of the savage, as he bows down to wood and stone, bears testimony to the instinct which is in us all to worship One above. The very crying upon "GOD," which we hear at times on the lips of the unbeliever in some agony of pain or fear, sets as it were a seal to the universal desire to be heard by One who can help us. And the happiness and peace which, in the House of Worship, guard the faithful from the miserable doubts that elsewhere occasionally beset them, are surely GOD'S own

approving witness to those who humbly offer and present unto Him their bodies, souls, and spirits.

For, after all, the lesson which we learnt in our early childhood was that we should not only abstain from every kind of idolatry, but that there is laid upon us also the positive duty of worshipping GOD. This it is which is one of the first marks of all GOD'S revelations of Himself; this, which all, even the ungodly, even the fallen angels, are constrained to render to Him; this, which is included in all the sacrifices; this, whereto the psalmist is always calling us; this, which the Jewish and the Christian Church alike have ever rendered to Him; this, which is the real delight of every earnest heart. Verily, "all the world doth worship Thee." For Thou art worthy to be praised with all pure and holy praise, and with Thy universal Church we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name. But our highest Eucharistic service is just a lowly preparation for the glorious worship which shall be one chief joy, one most gladdening occupation in Heaven. All our devotion here must have mingled with it much humble prayer, much penitent confession. There it will all be praise. The Book of the Revelation teems with worship, but its utterance is thanksgiving throughout. They praise Him above while His work is still unfinished below. They praise Him when the great voice proclaims that it is done. They praise Him, all His servants praise Him, great

and small; and all nations come and worship before Him; and the rest of love expands into the rest of praise, as the holy dead pass through judgment to glory, and we hear "as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the LORD GOD omnipotent reigneth."

3. Yet there is something further. Even the ever-increasing knowledge of the Most High, even the everlasting song of triumphant and thankful gladness before Him, does not absorb the whole being of the redeemed of the LORD. The crown of their rejoicing is not in their attainment of Heaven; nor yet only in their joining the perfect harmony of angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven; nor yet in the wonders of their completed knowledge in Heaven; nor even only in the beatific vision which is the eternal glory of Heaven. No, it is summed up for us in that little sentence, that great prediction, "His servants shall serve Him." This, in its measure, is our best privilege in this world; this marks off the true from the false, even here; this it is which, amid many most bitter griefs, still gives us pleasure, and holds us up with hope; this brightens our patience, even when we can do no more, with the comforting thought that it is with us on earth as with the angels in Heaven, where—

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

And so in that wonderful world which is very near us, the occupation which will delight us most will be this of continual service. For, as has been truly said, "the business and beatitude of Heaven must consist in conformity of the will to the will of GOD. . . . The office of His creatures must there be to do His work, and that office can be happiness only in so far as His work is to them delightful. The love of GOD, the willing submission of the whole nature to Him, which is here a duty, is there an essential of existence."

Oh, unspeakable blessing—so to have done GOD'S work on earth, in union with, and in dependence on, the only Meritorious Worker, the only "Righteous Servant," Himself the Everlasting SON, as to be admitted to angelic labours in Heaven! They have done and borne His will, and loved to praise Him, and bent themselves to learn of Him. "Therefore are they before the throne of GOD, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them," to be the centre of their life and light, and to make them eternally happy in the knowledge, and worship, and service of Himself.

XLIX.

SONGS OF ETERNAL JOY.

"Innumerous choirs before the shining throne
Their joyful anthems raise,
Till Heaven's glad halls are echoing with the tone
Of that great hymn of praise,
And all its host rejoices,
And all its blessed throng
Unite their myriad voices
In one eternal song!"

MEYFART (1634).

THERE will be perfect gladness in the occupations of the Heavenly kingdom, and we shall not need the cheering and the comfort which the Divine gift of music brings us here, under the heavy burden of our work.

But its wondrous depth and compass, its melody and harmonies, so far above and beyond all that stirs and soothes us here, will there assuredly express the pleasure which our ransomed nature feels at GOD'S right hand for ever. Yes, music itself, made complete and glorious by GOD who

gave it, will be part of the fulness of our joy in the Presence of the LORD.

I. For, first, music is the very language of that world. If, as we have seen, worship is one of the delightful works of the inhabitants of Heaven, then music, which is the greatest delight of the human ear, till GOD Himself speaks to it, the highest offering which the human voice can render to GOD, may well be thought of as the outpouring of the inmost love of the celestial hosts,

> "That undisturbèd song of pure concent,
> Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
> To Him that sits thereon,
> With saintly shout and solemn jubilee,
> Where the bright seraphim, in burning row,
> Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow,
> And the cherubic host, in thousand choirs,
> Touch their immortal harps of golden wires." [1]

On earth we cannot always gladden ourselves with music, for who would sing songs to him that hath a heavy heart? and even the merry hearts do often sigh, and turn away from their best recreation and enjoyment. But Heaven holds no saddened spirits, no gloomy faces. The angelic nature is all liberty and joy. Their service is the perfect freedom of beings who live for GOD. Their worship is the adoration of those who entirely love Him, and whose glory and delight is to behold His face.

[1] Milton.

Their knowledge is the knowledge of His will, the sight of His perfections. The angels do indeed, we read, "desire to look into" the mysteries of our redemption, but this is only that they may praise Him more; and when the Church makes known to them the manifold wisdom of GOD, though they are "principalities and powers in heavenly places," they are princely and powerful, only to magnify Him the more for all His goodness and for all His wondrous works. Alike for the creation and the redemption of mankind, these angels of His, that excel in strength, have been ever praising GOD. When He laid the foundations of the earth, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of GOD shouted for joy." And when He brought "in the First-begotten into the world, He said, Let all the angels of GOD worship Him." "And suddenly there was with the angel" of the nativity "a multitude of the heavenly host, praising GOD." We see them for a moment, here and there, as the vail is lifted, and catch the echo of their praise, and know that to their LORD and ours, the Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry.

II. Another host of worshippers, another band of immortal singers, are gathering at the footstool of the throne. In the school of the Great King we are learning the first elements of that wonderful music.

Our psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are

a practice, not merely intellectual, for the everlasting sacrifice of praise in Heaven.

When our heart is lifted up in Beethoven's sublime "Hallelujah to the FATHER," or in that thrilling chorus wherewith Handel constrains us to give "Glory to GOD in the highest" for MESSIAH'S birth; when, with the reverent and triumphant Spohr, we join in the great burst of praise from "every creature that is in Heaven, and on the earth, and in the sea, crying aloud and saying, Blessing, honour, glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever," or, with the devout spirit of Mendelssohn, raise the chorale, "Let all men praise the LORD"; when Barnby's exquisite chant helps us to realize the lesson of our psalmody, that "it is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto the Name of the Most Highest," or the simple yet most expressive tones of Crotch bid us, by the very joy of the notes, "Give thanks unto the LORD, for He is gracious, and His mercy endureth for ever," or Dupuis' bright chords carry us along what may be called the Psalm of the Citizen of Heaven[1] —what do we, if in earnest, but train our voices and our hearts to sing in everlasting anthems round about the throne?

The humble Christian, cheering her lonely heart with some well-known evening hymn; the sailor boys

[1] Psalm cxix.

on the great and wide sea, joining those at home in happy Christmas carols; the distant traveller, waking the echoes of hill and vale by old familiar strains; the little band of worshippers adding their joyful sound to the vocal thanksgiving of the Church throughout all the world; the sick men and suffering children, able, now and then, to "sing aloud upon their beds"; and even thou, my soul, joyful in GOD, amid thy sorrow, and mindful of all His benefits—all are preparing for the magnificent symphonies of Heaven.

"Saints below, with heart and voice,
Still in songs of praise rejoice,
Learning here, by faith and love,
Songs of praise to sing above."

Had it not been that

"Sin
Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great LORD, whose love their motion swayed
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good,"

we too, in each generation, had shared the endless Alleluia of the jubilant angels. Penitent and trustful faith will restore to us our power for that harmony.

"O may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with Heaven, till GOD ere long
To His celestial concert us unite,
To live with Him, and sing in endless morn of light."

For indeed it is to that eternal blending of all true strains of joy that GOD is calling us, even by the very delights of music here, and by the very yearning and sadness which come over us when silence follows song, and the music which enchanted us is mute.

> "One and unending is that triumph-song
> Which to the angels and us shall belong."

The voices of Heaven can neither weary us, nor be wearied. The living creatures lead the praises of eternity, and "they rest not day and night, saying, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, LORD GOD Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

III. What perfect music that will be, when for the first time the Choirs of Heaven and earth together throng up the steeps of light, to glorify for ever the glorious name!

Each of the hosts of the LORD listens now for the voices of the other; each delights to join, at least in spirit, with the happy holy sound.

Here, in the worship of the Church on earth, we sing all the more reverently and joyfully "because of the angels,"[1] who, unseen themselves, are rejoicing with us. And there, in the courts of the splendour of GOD, the angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven raise to Him that song of pure

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 10. This reminds us that the holy angels are with us in our Divine service, and that they watch our worship, even as to the posture of our bodies.

and peaceful gladness, with which we humbly unite ourselves before the altar, in penitence and hope, to praise and magnify the LORD, since both Heaven and earth are full of His glory.

But very soon, as time is reckoned in eternity, the vast company of the angels of GOD will accompany the armies of the ransomed saints with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, as they rise to meet the LORD in the air.

There is indeed a song which shall be sung before the throne by one great band of the redeemed, which shall entrance all ears that hear it, although not all the bands shall utter it. The beloved disciple tells us that when, in the visions of GOD, he saw the Lamb stand on the Mount Zion, he "heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and" he "heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, . . . and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand," the perfect number, not actual but mystical, of the virgin souls among GOD'S people.

Great is the joy thereat—the thankful never-envious joy of the listening hosts. But "the harps of GOD," the songs of praise and gladness, are ready also for all who "have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb"—His penitent and purified members—that "great multitude which

no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," which shall stand "before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation to our GOD, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." There are to be seen the saints of either Testament, and, mingled with the holy angels, "they sing the Song of Moses the servant of GOD, and the Song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, LORD GOD Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."

All voices of those who loved and served Him in Heaven and on earth shall have part in that song of endless joy,

"All true, all faultless, all in tune,"

and in the midst of them—wonderful revelation! —shall be heard the mighty Voice of the LORD Himself, the Fountain of music, as of all that is beautiful and good, the glorious and gracious GOD, who shall "rest in His love, and joy over" them "with singing."

L.

THE INNUMERABLE COMPANY OF ANGELS.

"Angels, thy old friends, there shall greet thee,
Glad at their own Home now to meet thee."

CRASHAW.

IN the beginning, ere GOD created the Heavens and the earth, the holy angels, of course, were not with Him. But ever since He called into being those beloved ministering spirits, they have been associated with the very thought of Heaven; and ever since GOD made man upon the earth, our human nature has had in them most precious and watchful friends, ready at all times, by His appointment, to succour and defend us. All through the records and prophecies of the Word of GOD, we find the blessed angels set in charge for men, and passing, now one by one, now two together, now in hosts, from Heaven to earth, to help them at their need, and to show them what service is, and patience, and purity, and diligence, and zeal, and point the upward path to GOD.

And even when the way was clearly shown, and

the kingdom opened, by the crucified and risen LORD, so far from letting us imagine that our angel friends would no longer be required, and should no longer be expected, He taught us to expect them all the more because of His mediation, assuring the disciples that they should "see Heaven open, and the angels of GOD ascending and descending upon the Son of Man," and visiting us as His members still upon earth.

How greatly the soul of the Christian rejoices in this communion between those who have ever loved the LORD above, and those whom in this lower world He would have to love Him! How truly does their mutual fellowship with Him prove to us that the musical harmony we spoke of, depends upon a higher and deeper harmony! Well may we, in trying to lift up our hearts to Heaven, dwell upon the life and the work of those angels of His, who are our helpers now if we will let them help us, and who hereafter, if we be faithful, will be our companions before GOD for ever. They are our friends in CHRIST—our friends to remind us of Him, to solace and yet to admonish us concerning Him, from the moment of His departure to the moment of His return.

"With us they stayed, high warning to impart,
'The CHRIST shall come again
Even as He goes; with the same human heart,
With the same godlike train.'

Oh, jealous GOD! how could a sinner dare
Think on that dreadful day,
But that with all Thy wounds Thou wilt be there,
And all our angel friends to bring Thee on Thy way?"

Let us think of them now. What a wonderful picture they present to us—how august, yet how attractive! We can indeed remember them and welcome them as visitants here.

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep."

But this is not their Home. We long to see them there, around the Throne of GOD, and already we see them there, in their greatness and beauty, reflected in the mirror of the Word.

And first we note their marvellous multitude. It is one of the truths which we realize in the Church as brought by faith within reach of heavenly things. "We are come . . . unto an innumerable company of angels."[1] The witness of the prophet and the witness of the Divine alike show us the vastness of that celestial host. "I beheld," says Daniel the beloved, in his vision of "the Ancient of Days," "thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him." "And I beheld," writes the beloved St. John, "and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times

[1] Heb. xii. 22.

ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." All through the Holy Scriptures, in the law, in the history, in the poetry, in the prophecies, in the gospel, in the apostolic writings, in the final revelation, from time to time GOD lifts the veil, and shows us the multitudinous armies which are in Heaven.[1] How striking is the utterance of our LORD, suddenly called forth by the too great vehemence of a human friend! "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My FATHER, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" Who, after this, can speak of Turner's wondrous painting of the mustering of the warrior angels, as fanciful, or fail to rejoice at the sight beheld by Milton in his blindness, when, on an instant,

> "The empyreal host
> Of angels, by imperial summons called,
> Innumerable before the Almighty's throne
> Forthwith, from all the ends of Heaven, appeared
> Under their hierarchs in orders bright,
> Ten thousand thousand ensigns high advanced"?

Oh, what will it be, when His banner over us is love, and we are filled with eternal trust, to see, beneath Him and around Him, the all but countless throng of those white robes, those glittering forms!

For, again, we think, through GOD'S own teaching,

[1] Gen. xxxii. 2; Deut. xxxiii. 2; 1 Kings xxii. 19; Josh. v. 14; Ps. lxviii. 17; Dan. vii. 9, 10; St. Matt. xxvi. 53; St. Jude 14; 2 Thess. i. 7; Rev. v. 11.

of their exceeding great brightness and beauty. We behold them one by one; and each, as an angel of GOD, fresh from that Face of Majesty, is almost terrible in his shining. We behold them in their wonderful array, band after band, going forward with the chariots and horses of fire; and the vast gatherings of men, to which we are accustomed, seem as common things. Now, it is a single messenger of GOD coming down from Heaven, having great power; and the earth is lightened with his glory. Now, as the LORD Himself ascends to Heaven, two of the blessed company who attend Him appear in shining garments to His disciples. Now, He Himself prepares us for the grandeur of His return, and shows us that even in that day, and close to the Majesty of the Presence, and because of it, the loving watchers shall really be angels of light. "He shall come in His own glory, and in His FATHER'S, and of the holy angels." Who but He, the Everlasting SON of the FATHER, could have spoken of a threefold glory at the very time of the most awful manifestation of GOD? Who but He could have turned the eyes of men, even for a moment, from the face of the Judge, and the transcendent greatness and glory of GOD, to the brightness of the angelic guard surrounding Him in His approach to the earth? Surely, it all enhances the honour of the LORD Himself. He who will come "to be admired in His saints," to be glorified for

the holiness which He Himself has wrought in them, so that they will cast their crowns before the throne, will also triumph in the splendour of His angels, since all their light is drawn from Him, and they live but for His praise. See how they shrink from taking any of the glory to themselves. The "worshipping of angels" finds no support from them. The Evangelist St. John records that when he saw and heard the wonders of the revelation of GOD, he fell down to worship before the feet of the angel. But the angel said unto him, "See thou do it not. . . . I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of JESUS: worship GOD." The greater they are, the more they humble themselves. The angels' faces shone like the fiery flame, all purity and fervour; but "all the angels stood round about the throne, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped GOD." And we, when we behold them thus, shall join the glorious spirits in their deep abasement, knowing, by that homage of the shining ones, that all the glory is the LORD'S.

But again we watch them, and mark their extraordinary powers. Those angels of His whom He calls to praise Him, do indeed "excel in strength." The Hebrew Psalmist specially describes them as "the mighty." And the record of their work in this their lower world, while full of their gentleness, suggests their greatness also. Great is the power

of the angel who cries mightily with a strong voice, to tell of Babylon's fall; and fearful are the powers intrusted to the seven angels who are the instruments of the wrath of GOD; and wonderful in force, as fabled Æolus, the four angels that really hold the four winds of the earth; and marvellous the action and the utterance of the mighty angel, who "set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth." All conquering is the valour of Michael and his angels against the dragon and his angels; and utterly victorious the vigour of the one angel to whom it is given to bind the dragon himself. Truly the angelic nature has been endowed with irresistible power and might, by the LORD of hosts.

And to Him all their powers are devoted. Theirs is a perfect obedience; they delight to do His commandments, and to hearken to the voice of His words. So did we think of them in our daily prayer, as the models for us in the fulfilling of His will. The angel Gabriel is sent from GOD, and flies swiftly on His behests to touch the captive prophet. Michael the archangel is as ready to guard for GOD the body of Moses, as to lead the armies in Heaven. So is it with them, instant attention, constant preparedness, immediate accomplishment of the Divine bidding. Everything, every one, in that glorious band, will help us to obey.

And the look upon their faces tells us at once the secret. They are always in the vision of GOD—always behold our FATHER'S Face. This was our comfort as we thought of the little children whom they protected.

"Heaven in the depth and height is seen;
On high among the stars, and low
In deep clear waters; all between
Is earth, and tastes of earth; even so
The Almighty One draws near
To strongest seraphs there, to weakest infants here."

And, from that Face, they gather all that gladness which makes the angels lovable. This is the glory of their ceaseless song; this the great cause of their joy over one sinner that repenteth; their delight in the progress of those, the heirs of salvation, for whom on earth they are ever ministering.

Oh! when we see those blessed white-robed beings, and share with them the beatific sight of GOD, we shall know that they have indeed been watchers and helpers for us here, enabling us, often late in life, to become as little children and share the children's crown; guarding us, as they have always guarded them, in perils and temptations; present in our worship; rejoicing at our penitence; carrying us in our last sleep into Abraham's bosom; and raising us, in the power of GOD, to a life like theirs, and to—

"A song which even angels
Can never, never sing."

LI.

FELLOWSHIP WITH ALL THE SAINTS.

"Nor shall I longer stand alone.
I see the crownèd host appear,
The mighty host before His throne,
Who shines for ever pure and clear,
The souls of those, who on their way
Still hour by hour were longing here,
With burning love and many a tear,
To see the glories of His day."

SPENER.

WERE "a man in CHRIST" caught up now into Heaven, he would have the companionship of the holy angels, but of those in his own nature he would see but Enoch and Elijah with our LORD. All saints at rest, being "out of the body," would still be hidden from him in the Paradise of GOD, and all the militant saints, yet "in the body," he would have left behind, in his departure from the earth.

But the Christian knows that those in Paradise are not made perfect without those on earth, while those who are alive and remain, even at the coming

of the LORD, "shall not prevent them that are asleep." All, both resting and employed, wait for the life of the world to come. All, when He appears, shall meet the LORD in the air, and so shall they ever be with the LORD. No contrast then, between the quiescent Church, and the Church still warring here. Both elements will have come together, to form the Church triumphant, and all the servants of GOD will thenceforth be for ever one—His people all righteous, all ready and glad to serve Him, all enabled to see His Face, and to share, in His presence, the fulness of joy.

All the saints will be there. Those who have been in the unseen world for thousands of years, and those who will have been there for a day—the saints of the older Covenant, and those whose charter of heavenly citizenship has been the New Testament; those who have been indeed of the body of the Church, and those who have been of its spirit; the patriarchs and leaders of the two grand divisions of the army, and faithful men and women, called from east and west and north and south, to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of GOD; the multitude of Christian penitents and the greater multitude of little Christian children—these shall people Heaven, welcomed by the hosts of angels dwelling there, and owned by the Eternal FATHER, as "accepted in the Beloved" SON, through the world-wide, time-conquering communion of the HOLY GHOST.

The family will at last be gathered in the Home, the one flock under the one Shepherd, all living members united, no longer only in heart and in mystery, but in presence, with the Divine Head, who is their life. Glorious consummation, blessed eternity! GOD grant that none of us, who cherish a hope so wonderful, may be disappointed of it, through thinking it too easy of attainment—through neglecting that present holiness which is necessary for future blessedness, that path of faith and patience, of purity and love, which alone leads to eternal life!

But let the hope itself sink deeply into our hearts. For the hope has a heavenly source, and a heavenly end. It is an anchor of our souls, entering into that within the vail; it rests on CHRIST; it lifts us to GOD; it shows us that, even among men, we walk in the power of the SPIRIT, and among a vast number of our fellows, "called to be saints," and invited to Heaven as the Christian's home.

As we think happily of these and humbly of ourselves, our faith gives us "the substance of things hoped for." We stand already among the redeemed of the LORD. We are come, not only to the "innumerable company of angels" (whom we rejoice in as our friends), but "to the Mount Zion, the city of the living GOD, the heavenly Jerusalem, the general assembly and Church of the firstborn which are written in Heaven, and to the spirits of just men

made perfect," having holy boldness before "GOD the Judge of all," because of JESUS the Mediator.[1]

O let us make that vision of faith the great reality of our lives, remembering that, after all, this fellowship with the saints in Heaven will not depend upon our seeing them, since such fellowship is ours already in the visible Church, of which most of the members are to us unseen.

In Him who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," His Church, through all the nations and all the generations, is but one. The fellowship we have with those who were baptized at the same service with ourselves, those who knelt with us before the same altar, is identically the fellowship which we have with St. John and St. Paul, St. Stephen, and St. Polycarp. O what a marvellous privilege it is to be allowed to realize already the fulfilment of our daily prayer, to be numbered with GOD'S saints in glory everlasting! What will it be, what is it even now, to the heart of the believer, to be numbered with the glorious company of the apostles, and the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and the noble army of martyrs; with the heroic Ambrose, and Augustine the grand penitent, and the heavenly-minded Bernard; with Pascal, and Francis, and Fenelon; with the great lights of English Christianity, Ken, Andrewes, and Herbert; with St. Margaret of Scotland, and St. Columba the

[1] See Heb. xii. 22-24.

Irish missionary, and our own St. Benedict; with Nicholas Ferrar and Izaak Walton and Richard Hooker; with those who wrote for us "The Serious Call," and "The Pilgrim's Progress," and "The Double Witness," and "The Christian Year," and "The Saints' Rest"; with the true Churchmen of the States, and of the islands of the sea, and of all countries near and far; with the saintly soldier, and the brave poet, and the devout student of the nineteenth century, and those who, in our day, have prayed, and watched, and battled, for the Cross; and with that vast throng of the hidden saints whom we commemorate every year on their high festival, those of whom the world knows nothing, though they were indeed "well known" of GOD!

Even here, in our strangely-mingled society, one of our best delights has been occasional converse with the great and good, the Christian men of science and art, and those who were at least not hostile to our Divine Friend, devoted to art and science, and not without some secret yearning for higher things.

What will it be, hereafter, when the world has yielded many of its wisest to the Church, and the Church has helped many of her clever converts to the chief wisdom and the one saintdom, and all whom GOD counts true and pure and loving are gathered to cast down their crowns before His throne—what will it be to spend the new life with

them, to be close to them, in intimate communion and perfect rest!

We shall share with them all celestial interests, complete knowledge, full-grown energies; and as, in this present order, those of them who were near us condescended to our cares and occupations, so will it be part of their gladness to enter into our delights; their glories will be our glories; they and we, one and all, shall be rejoicing together, all the children of Zion rejoicing in their King.

And we shall never lose them. No need, then, for the anxious prayer, so often offered here, that we may always give thanks unto GOD in His Holy Church; no need to beseech Him any longer, that He would not, because of our sins, shut up our souls with the sinners, or hinder us, ever again, from partaking of the felicity of His chosen.

With them (GOD grant it) we shall always worship, always serve, for ever satisfied with His likeness, for ever brightened by His face. Theirs and ours will be a state of bliss, not, as here, a partial and broken glimpse of it, caught sometimes by a single eye, sometimes by the two or three, sometimes, for a moment, by the great congregation. Such passing sights of Heaven will be merged in the abiding condition of the blessedness of all.

"Now they reign in heavenly glory, now they walk in golden light,
Now they drink, as from a river, holy bliss and infinite,

Love and peace they taste for ever, and all truth and knowledge see
In the beatific Vision of the blessed TRINITY."

And in the Saints of GOD we shall behold reflected the glory of the SAVIOUR, and the power of the HOLY GHOST. The miracles of Divine love, of which we are witnesses here, and which we are allowed to exemplify in ourselves, will then have left an everlasting mark on the children of GOD, ransomed, sanctified, and saved. "His Name shall be in their foreheads," and He shall be glorified in them, and "they shall see His Face."

LII.

REUNION WITH OUR OWN IN CHRIST.

"The warmest love on earth is still
Imperfect when 'tis given:
But there's a purer clime above,
Where perfect hearts in perfect love
Unite, and this is Heaven."

ANON.

THE joy of future fellowship with all GOD'S saints contains within it, as a very special and most precious thing, the beautiful and blessed prospect of the meeting and the life with those we have loved and lost, those whom, loving now, we are called to leave awhile; that meeting which shall have no parting, that life which shall have no end, no death or change or sorrow.

The love of those at home, the love of father and mother, of husband or of wife, of brother and sister and child, of friends dear to us as our own soul, the love which is as strong as death, and which long years of separation cannot lessen; this love, so natural, so pure and bright and true, bears

witness to our heart's great hope, that when we awake after CHRIST'S likeness, those who were bound up with us here in bonds of closest affection, if only they too "are CHRIST'S at His coming," shall be united with us in all holy and spiritual ties of everlasting communion.

The very heathen—not only the poets with their lively fancies, but the philosophers in their deep thoughts of the unknown GOD and the unseen world—looked forward longingly to the recognition of intimate friends, as well as of great men, in the life beyond the grave.[1]

Then, as now, the voice of our common humanity, even of the dwellers in the darkness, is carried forward, as into a better land, where the beloved abide to hear and answer.

And the light of the Word of the LORD, in this as in so many other ways sufficient to comfort and to guide us, brings Divine illumination on this innate hope of ours, this general heritage of the expectations of love. Holy Scripture shows the spiritual unity even in that blessed state where they are resting now, ere they pass to the higher Heaven. As we speak, in familiar language, of "our people"—meaning the inmates of our home—so speaks the Scripture of a reunion with them, under that very name, after death. Not only of

[1] See instances given by Canon Luckock on "The Intermediate State," p. 108–112.

Jacob, buried with Abraham and Isaac in the cave of Machpelah, is it written that he "was gathered unto his people"; but the same expression is used by the LORD Himself concerning Moses, who was buried utterly apart from friends on Nebo's lonely mountain, and whose sepulchre was known to none but GOD. It is the soul, then, which thus is gathered home, to burst upon the sight of dear ones taken earlier, and to hear their cry of joy,

"Thou art come! Indeed is it thou from the far land?"

And there are two passages, one in the Old Testament, one in the New, which illustrate for us the personal nature of that happy meeting. And these, well known as they are, have a most sacred and consoling message for mourners. David, bereft of his little child, ceases from the bitter tears which he had wept in hours of terrible suspense concerning him, for he says, "Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." How real to the royal penitent is the comfort of that prospect! And then great David's greater Son, Himself cheering a penitent at His side in death, speaks such a wonderful word to him, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." The body of the repentant robber, like the body of the merciful SAVIOUR, was to lie in the tomb. But the spirit of the One was to meet the spirit of the other, with mutual recognition and affection.

How, in the disembodied state, the souls can know each other, we cannot fully tell. It may be, as the appearance of Moses, when, on the Holy Mount, he was seen with Elijah who had not died at all, suggests to us, and as many both in primitive and in later times have believed, that the soul when "out of the body" really retains the image of the body by which it had been clothed on earth.[1] Or it may be, as the deep spiritual sympathy between two loving souls may make us think, that the departed are drawn one to the other by inward, not merely by outward, attraction.

But this at least we feel when we meditate on this communion as realized in Paradise—that in Heaven it will be fuller far and a cause of perfect happiness for us in CHRIST. For there will meet not only the souls of the righteous, the souls of loving and beloved friends, but their spiritual bodies also, the same yet changed, the shining form of those we knew so well, with every weakness and deformity removed, and now the perfect counterpart of the perfected and glorified spirit.

Oh! what a joy beyond all words lies in that blessed, blessed promise!

"On that happy Easter morning
All the graves their dead restore:
Father, sister, child, and mother,
Meet once more.

[1] Tertullian and Irenæus, quoted by Canon Luckock.

"To that brightest of all meetings
Bring us, JESU CHRIST, at last,
By Thy Cross, through death and judgment,
Holding fast."

We need not fear the marring of the dear familiar features in the earth or in the deep, when those we love are hidden from our sight. If they be "dead in CHRIST," present corruption cannot hurt them, and even if we remain until His coming, we must "all be changed." So in the risen body, in the glorious body, we and they shall meet, and death and dissolution shall be remembered no more, in the knowledge of a love and a faith that can never die. The LORD of life knew, even as Man, our love, and understood its thorough faithfulness, its awful grief in separation, and He feels most deeply for us. If "JESUS wept" over His dear friend's grave, whom yet He would raise so soon, He is afflicted still in our affliction, while bidding us "weep not" like those that have no hope. He tells us cheerily of that which shall soon be given, of the sweet eternal day which shall witness the knitting up of severed friendships, and the healing of broken hearts. For this we watch and wait, never forgetting, for a single day, in our loving prayers, those precious souls who, sleeping in JESUS, are as much ours as ever, and safe from all alarms. And while we watch and wait, He strengthens us, and helps us, in a holy, repentant trust, to commune with those who, for

a while, have passed away. Surely, it is quite Christian, that most pathetic outcry, which must be so dear to many of our brethren in America, so moving to many of us!

"Wilt not thy own meek heart demand me there—
That heart whose fondest throbs to me were given?
My name on earth was ever in thy prayer,
Shall it be banished from thy tongue in Heaven?

"Shalt thou not teach me, in that calmer Home,
The wisdom that I learned so ill in this—
The wisdom which is love—till I become
Thy fit companion in that land of bliss?"[1]

Yes, indeed, all will be perfect love there, love without misunderstanding, without coldness, without self-seeking, without fear of loss, or shadows of sin. Love will then be the abiding habit, the pervading principle, of the life everlasting. The memorial of our friendships and affections here is not without some sad associations, and the sense of our great bereavements breaks out at times into a prayer for pardon. But the love beyond, wrapped up in the deepest love of all, is full of hope and joy.

"Forgive my grief for one removed,
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
I trust he lives in Thee, and there
I find him worthier to be loved."

Only let us remind ourselves, that it is their life in CHRIST that binds us to them, both as to the

[1] W. C. Bryant. "The Future Life."

past which is finished, and as to the boundless future. The reunion to which we look, and on which we stay ourselves, is a reunion with our own in CHRIST. No one who departs out of this world as an impenitent rebel against GOD, could hereafter be a friend of ours, though on earth he had been dear to us. It has been truly and thoughtfully said, that the happiness of the unfallen angels is never marred by the loss of those once with them in Heaven, "who kept not their first estate." So also shall there be no regretful longing, no lessening of our gladness, in the recollection of those whom even the merciful and gracious LORD does not permit to give thanks with His inheritance. But, short of this, we may not be void of hope as to many an imperfect Christian of our company, any more than we would desire our own less excusable imperfections utterly to overcloud the hopes of others as to us.

And oh! when from these uncertainties we rise to the sure and certain hope which is allowed us concerning many that we love, how calm and happy is our thought of them, how bright and beautiful and comforting the faith wherewith we look forward to be with them and with all the saints—with the well known and the unknown—rejoicing for ever in the presence of the LORD, and knowing, from His welcome to us and to them, that they are ours, and we are theirs, in Him, and shall never be parted again!

LIII.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

"It shall be light, when I behold
The Blessed Vision, long foretold!
The dearest hope, the sweetest grace,
My soul's Beloved, face to face."

S. J. STONE.

THE chief blessedness of Heaven will be the near enjoyment of GOD. Beyond the glory and the worship of His holy angels, beyond the eternal companionship of all His saints, beyond the personal bliss of the everlasting reunion with those who are ours in His most Holy SON, beyond and above, within and around all these, is the unspeakable joy of the Presence of the LORD.

To be at rest for ever in the bosom of the FATHER, in Heaven "the spiritual centre of life and light and truth and love," and, amid all the worlds which He has made, for ever to serve Him; to sit down with the Everlasting SON of the FATHER in His throne, as those who, like Himself, have overcome; to discern the wonderful nearness and the more

wonderful indwelling of the Seven Spirits which are before the throne, the loving, quickening, glorifying Presence of the SPIRIT of our FATHER, who had granted us on earth His sevenfold gifts in ever-increasing measure—this is indeed the highest happiness of man, this the perfect and perpetual delight of Heaven.

It was for this that we were prepared, in the days of lowly penitence and faith, by the loving-kindness of "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose Name is Holy," and who yet reassured us then by saying, "I dwell in the high and lofty place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." It was to this, the complete manifestation of His greatness and His goodness, that we looked forward in those days of reviving long ago, when, through realizing, in the sacred Communion, GOD'S presence as "Heaven the heart's true home," words like those of the well-known hymn rose to our grateful lips—

"No earthly father loves like Thee,
No mother e'er so mild,
Bears and forbears as Thou hast done
With me Thy sinful child.

"FATHER of JESUS, love's reward,
What rapture will it be,
Prostrate before Thy throne to lie,
And gaze and gaze on Thee!"

It is on this that the vision of the greatest of all

revelations opens; it is to this, as still a future marvel, a future perfecting of joy, that the Church below, and the saints at rest, and the angels in glory, are still, in hope and love, looking forward. However true it may be that part of the testimony which GOD sent to His servant John refers to what is already passing in the celestial realm, this at least is an unveiling of that which shall be, not only of that which is. We listen to the trumpet-voice, and it says, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter."[1] And immediately, he is allowed to see, as the great marvel and the most uplifting joy, the PRESENCE. "Behold, a throne was set in Heaven, and ONE sat on the throne." Here, at last, is the glory of the Light which no man can approach unto; here, the vision of the Almighty, which no man can see, except in the SPIRIT; here, the satisfying of the eye, the filling of the ear, to be attained by none but the redeemed of the LORD.

All tends to This, all points to This, alike in deepest abasement and in most perfect trust, all "the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope," on earth, all the surroundings of Heaven. The earthly witnesses we know, for we have moved among them, and they have sustained the very life of our souls. But think for awhile—think often—of the heavenly. The Presence of the Almighty is

[1] Rev. iv.

full of awe, of infinite majesty and perfect beauty. But still It draws us as with the cords of a man, with bands of love. The appearance is not simply terrible, but attractive, gladdening, and restful. "He that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius"—the jasper, clear as crystal, brilliant and lively, emblem of the shining mercy of our GOD; the sardius, with its red and fiery hue, suggestive of His glory in redemption. "And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald"—all tints of the deluged earth and the burning sun, melted into the one celestial colour of imperishable hope. "And before the throne a glassy sea, like unto crystal"—no restless relentless ocean, with drowning waves or raging storms, but calm with the promise of profound eternal peace. "And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones; and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments, and on their heads crowns of gold." Lo here the testimony of the four and twenty portions of the Old Testament Scriptures[1]—no mere human testimony, since the "holy men of GOD

[1] As early as the third century this was taken to be the meaning. The twenty-four books are thus reckoned, five of Moses, five of the former prophets (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings), five of the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, twelve lesser prophets); nine of the Psalms, poetical books, and other holy writings.

spake as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST," and His "word endureth for ever in Heaven." And then, "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes"—the four Gospels, embodying the life and light of the New Testament, coming from GOD and giving honour to GOD, and testifying everywhere to His CHRIST; proclaiming CHRIST as Royal, as Sacrificed, as Incarnate, as sending the SPIRIT from Heaven,[1] and abiding always as that Word of GOD which is living and life-giving.[2] And all the witness, all the teachings, all the lightnings and thunderings and voices, lead up to the glory of the blessed and undivided TRINITY. For the LAMB of GOD is there, visible as having been slain; and the other COMFORTER, invisible except through His gifts, the seven lamps of fire, which are the Seven Spirits of GOD, and GOD the FATHER Himself; and the utterance of the everlasting gospel, resounding in all the written word and over the whole Heaven, repeats the worship of the Church throughout all the world. "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is the LORD GOD, the Almighty, which was, and which is, and which is to come."

O blissful revelation, glorious fulfilment there of our highest Eucharist here! Marvellous reward before the throne for us who have worshipped at His footstool! Blessed vision of unutterable glad-

[1] The lion, the calf, the man, the flying eagle.

[2] Heb. iv. 12; Psalm cxix. 50.

ness granted to all who, not having seen, have loved!

We shall be with our FATHER, and because we accounted Him, even here, our "Portion for ever," we shall indeed, according to His promise, "inherit all things."

We shall be with our SAVIOUR, and though, while on earth, we knew not what we should be, the knowledge of faith shall not be disappointed, for we shall really "see Him as He is," and "shall be like Him."

We shall be with our strengthening Guide, the SPIRIT of all grace and all consolation; and the sorrows which we bore through Him, and the temptations which in His power we overcame, will have brought us to possess eternally, what here we have often tasted, "joy in the HOLY GHOST," then the proof, as now the pledge, of life in the kingdom of GOD.

YES, we shall be with GOD, who is LOVE itself—LOVE in His eternal nature, and LOVE in His marvellous work, and LOVE to us, and LOVE in us. And if He is ours, and we are His, for ever, all delights, all glories, all that He has prepared for us, all that He has revealed unto us by His SPIRIT, all are summed up in Him.

"I seek not of Thy Eden land
The forms and hues to know,
What trees in mystic order stand,
What strange, sweet waters flow:

"What duties fill the heavenly day,
Or converse glad and kind,
Or how along each shining way
The bright processions wind.

"O joy to hear with sense new-born
The angels' greeting strains,
And sweet to see the first fair morn
Gild the celestial plains.

"But sweeter far to trust in Thee
While all is yet unknown,
And through the death-dark cheerily
To walk with Thee alone."

Yes, indeed, the faith which worketh experience, and the experience which worketh hope, confirm each day in the Christian's heart the steady prayer of three thousand years ago, the steady prayer which rests, for time and for eternity, on the truth and love of GOD. "Thou shalt show me the path of life: in Thy Presence is the fulness of joy; and at Thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore."

The practice of the Presence of GOD, as Lawrence the poor Brother taught us, is the best rule of a holy life; and it is the best preparation also for the eternal life with GOD hereafter.

Be ours, as we go forward thus, the sure yet humble hope of the Psalmist, "As for me, I shall behold Thy Presence in righteousness, and when I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it." Be ours, for all our worship and all our

work—yes, and at life's eventide, when we can work no more—the Church's fervent, faithful prayer, "Cleanse us, O LORD, and keep us undefiled, that we may be numbered among those blessed ones, who, having washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the LAMB, shall stand before Thy throne, and serve Thee day and night in Thy temple." So shall the prayer be answered for us when the day and night come to an end, in that city of the saints, that city of our GOD, in which no temple can be seen, "for the LORD GOD Almighty and the LAMB are the temple of it." And to us in the meanwhile, as we raise our hearts on high, and do His will below, will come again and again the sound of that great Voice, which places us, as it placed St. John, in the very heart of the life of the world to come. "Behold, the tabernacle of GOD is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and GOD Himself shall be with them, and be their GOD."

THE END.

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